THE CONFESSIONS OF A PRIMA DONNA

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To

G. Mario Sammarco

eminent artist, kindly gentleman, and loyal friend, this book is dedicated as a token of sincere esteem and admiration.

PREFACE

Although this account of the life, and especially of the career of a well-known and distinguished artist, was written by her with no intention that it should ever be published, those of her friends who learned of its existence finally persuaded her that it would be a mistake to consign it to a hiding place, as she had intended, or risk a future chance discovery. In the belief that it would prove interesting reading, both to those who have long admired the artist, as well as to others who may never have had the joy of listening to her wonderful voice, she has finally consented to its publication.

Since the majority of the persons mentioned in her pages are still living, it has been thought best to substitute in most cases fictitious names for real ones.

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CHAPTER I

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

My grandfather, an Italian, emigrated to the United States in the '40's, having been seriously involved in the revolts of his native province, Romagna. He escaped with his devoted valet, whose family had served the Della Roccas for generations; reached England in safety, and set out on a sailing vessel for Charleston, South Carolina. There he finally married my grandmother, a beauty and heiress. She died soon after my father was born, but her portrait, painted in the dress she wore when presented at the English court, on a visit to London, shows that she was indeed a beauty. This portrait now hangs in my home.

My grandfather never married again. I was but six years old when he died, but remember him quite distinctly. He used to take me on his knee, and tell me wonderful stories of fighting and soldiers, which stories I loved, although frequently after an especially exciting one they say I awoke crying in the night. He always spoke Italian to my father, and insisted upon my learning it.

The Civil War affected my family far less than most southern families. To my grandfather, who had fought in his native land for liberty, the idea of slavery was abhorrent, and when my grandmother's death put him in possession of a fine property, and a number of slaves, he promptly freed the latter. They remained on the plantation for wages, and my grandfather put in practice certain ideas he had on farming, with the result that his crops were the finest in the county, and he prospered. Owing to ill health, he took no part in the war, he had never become a citizen, and the fact that he was a foreigner saved him much unpleasantness in neighborhood relations.

My grandfather, I have been told, both sang and played the piano. I have heard that as a child he sang in the Pope's own choir in the Vatican. He had quantities of old masses and opera scores, and as a child I loved to turn over the yellow pages, pick out the Italian words I knew, and try to sing the music that I heard my father sing.

When fifteen, I lost both my parents within a few days, from yellow fever, contracted during a visit to New Orleans. My aunt, my mother's older sister, and my only relative, took charge of me. My parents had been extravagant, the property was deeply involved. I could no longer consider myself wealthy, but since my education had been rather scrappily conducted by governesses, it was thought that I must have the advantages of a couple of years in a city, and finally Baltimore was decided upon.

Thither we went, the autumn after my parents' death. As was the fashion, since I seemed to have

some talent, I was to have singing lessons. While my aunt was inquiring for "a master," chance put me in the hands of an exceptional teacher, who laid the foundations for all my subsequent success. Dear old *Maestro.*

We were staying in a boarding house. One morning I was alone, bored and restless. Hastily selecting a couple of old scores, I slipped down to the drawing room. It was deserted, and seating myself at the piano, I began singing under my breath. I turned to the *Miserere* from *Trovatore,* a great favorite of mine, and almost unconsciously I sang louder, until when I reached the high C I sang full voice, from pure joy of singing. I had lost consciousness of my surroundings, so that it was a shock when, at the end of the long, sustained high note, a mild voice murmured: *"Brava!"*

I started up in confusion. An elderly man stood in the doorway, regarding me with an amused smile.

"You are ambitious, Miss Leonora," he remarked with a foreign accent. "So it is grand opera, eh?"

I stammered something.

"Are you perhaps practicing a lesson? If so I will not disturb you."

"No—no—I am not studying—I have never had lessons yet, but I am to——"

"Peccato se la bella voce fosse guastata," he muttered under his breath, apparently not addressing me.

"Why should it be spoiled, and do you really think it is *bella?"* I cried excitedly.

"What? You understand Italian?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes, that is—a little—" I stammered, realizing that I had perhaps been bold.

He came towards me and gave me a keen look from under heavy brows.

"Are you perhaps Italian?" he asked in that language, and hesitatingly I replied, for I had never spoken Italian before to anyone but my father.

"No, that is, my grandfather was, but I speak it a little."

"Per Bacco! Your accent is excellent. And you are to study singing? With whom, if I may ask?"

"I don't know," I replied readily enough, and almost before I realized it I was telling the object of my stay in Baltimore, and of my aunt's inquiries for a teacher. I told him how I had sung ever since I could remember, of my Italian grandfather; in short, I chattered like a magpie. Finally he went to the piano, and began trying my voice in various exercises, in which, to me, fascinating occupation we were interrupted by my aunt's entrance and amazed exclamation.

The elderly Italian rose and with a low bow acknowledged my confused introduction, promptly presenting himself as: *"Maestro* Giorgio Pratesi, professor of singing."

"I was passing the door, heard this young lady singing, and ventured to interrupt. She has a good voice; I should like to teach her. If you care to bring her to my studio any day at twelve, this is the address." He wrote something on a card, handed it to my astonished aunt, and bowing to us both, left the room.

It seemed, on inquiry, that he was quite a famous teacher, and three days later we presented ourselves

at his studio, my aunt informing him that she had decided to place me under his instruction, if the terms were satisfactory.

He ignored this last, and asking us to be seated, he began (I wrote it all down in my diary):

"Your niece has a good voice. I shall like to teach her if she will work. I should not care to do so unless she will be regular, and remain some time."

Before we left it was understood that I should remain for two years, if mutually satisfactory, and the terms quoted I afterwards learned were just half what Pratesi usually charged.

CHAPTER II

AMBITIONS AND HARD WORK

As I look back upon the three years that followed, certain details stand out distinctly, despite the many years that have intervened. The study of singing fascinated me from the first, and I threw myself into it heart and soul.

For three years I studied, with no definite object in my own mind save to win the *Maestro's* approval. Later I knew that Pratesi had had one from the first. He merely told my aunt that my voice was good—never a stronger word of praise—and that since I had made progress it would be a pity to interrupt my studies. Since I cared more for singing than for anything else in the world, I easily overcame any objections on my aunt's part.

During my third winter in Baltimore, I was sometimes summoned to Pratesi's studio to sing for some elderly musicians, or the *Maestro's* few Italian friends. I also sang at several charity concerts and in private houses, always as an amateur. Thus I had my first taste of applause. Late in the spring I sang at a large musicale given by a friend and pupil of Pratesi, a wealthy and socially prominent woman.

This was my first important appearance, and my most ambitious one. I sang, I remember as though

it were yesterday, a group of old Italian songs, a duet with a contralto pupil of Pratesi, from an almost forgotten opera, and the Mad Scene from *Lucia.* This, with flute obbligato, quite "brought down the house." I was forced to return and bow a number of times, and for the first time felt the real footlight fever, a delicious excitement.

The Italian Ambassador had come from Washington to attend the musicale, for he was an old friend of the hostess. Mine had been the last number on the program, and Pratesi brought the Ambassador up and presented him. The latter warmly congratulated me, remarking in Italian, which language I now spoke fluently, that "only an Italian could sing like that." Several asked if I were studying for grand opera. This was literally the first time that such an idea had been presented to me.

Pratesi had often spoken of the careers of famous singers; had dwelt upon the fleeting triumphs, the necessity for striving only for artistic satisfaction, and I had listened as to an absorbing romance. That I, Louise Della Rocca, could ever sing on a stage for money would have seemed incredible to my aunt and friends.

Very soon after this large musicale, however, the *Maestro* suddenly demanded what my plans were for the coming winter.

"You have now reached the point where it rests with yourself whether you remain merely a talented amateur, or develop into an artist."

I was too amazed to speak.

"I have never spoken like this before," Pratesi re-

sumed, "because while I knew that your voice was equal to any requirements, that you are a good student, and that you have that inborn temperament which cannot be acquired—I knew that when first I heard you struggling with *Leonora's* aria—I was anxious to see how you would impress your personality upon an audience. Last week I *knew* that I am right. You held your audience as I expected. Did you not feel that yourself?" he demanded, glaring as he always did when excited, although a more truly gentle nature I have never known.

"I don't think I thought about it," I faltered. "I only thought what a beautiful room it was to sing in, that I was in good voice, and that it seemed that I sang better than usual."

"H'm! And afterward?"

"Afterward? Oh, I was glad people seemed to like it. I wanted to sing the aria all over again, for I was sure I could do better."

"Did you think how much better you could sing if you were in a white *accappatoia,* with your hair down over your shoulders, standing on a stage with footlights, and to the accompaniment of an orchestra, instead of a flute and piano?"

"An orchestra?" I gasped. "Oh, if I only could, just once."

"And if I say that you can, that you should, that it would be a crime to keep your voice from the world?"

I was too overcome to speak. Later, Pratesi told me that I sat there staring at him, tears running down my cheeks. I was obsessed with one idea; myself, an artist, an opera singer, singing always the music that

I loved; pleasing numbers of people; living in a kind of delightful dream, breathing a strange, subtle atmosphere, and moving amid beauty and melody.

Although it may seem incredible to the modern student, Pratesi never once mentioned monetary gains. Nor was it fame in the ordinary sense of which he spoke. Rather he alluded to my voice as something I owed to the world to use; of art as a high calling which those qualified could not choose but follow. The one all-absorbing fact to us both was that I might become a real artist, possibly one of the world's great ones.

He talked long, and I listened absorbed. Finally, when the room grew dusky in the twilight, he sent me home, bidding me think over all that he had said, and if possible let him know my decision before we left Baltimore the following week. I hurried home, locked myself in my room, and sat staring out into the spring night in vague, delightful revery.

That night I was roused from sleep by strange sounds from my aunt's room. Hurrying to her, I found her unconscious, moaning, her cheeks flushed. I was helpless, for I had never been ill a day in my life, but finally roused the one servant who slept on the premises, and sent him for a doctor. When he came, he looked grave, and pronounced it typhoid fever.

My aunt grew rapidly worse, and died without regaining consciousness. During the days that followed, my thoughts were so occupied with arrangements for her funeral, etc., that my own future was quite uncon-

sidered. When this was over, I had no idea what to do next.

I knew that the plantation which, save for a few old-fashioned jewels, laces, constituted my chief, if not my only property, was farmed on shares. But whether at the present time, late in April, any money was due me I had no idea. I had the address of the old lawyer who had, from my earliest recollection, attended to the family business. I must write for information.

As I sat in my unfamiliar black dress, thinking of all this the day after the funeral, there was a knock at the door. It was Pratesi.

"Signorina Luisa," he began, "I should like to have a little talk with you."

After expressions of sympathy, he asked if I had come to any decision in regard to our conversation. Soon I found myself telling him all about my affairs.

"There is no one who has any right to object to whatever plans you may make for the future?" he asked.

"No."

In giving conversations after so many years, while I cannot pretend to actual accuracy, yet some have so impressed themselves upon my memory that I am probably fairly accurate even as to words.

"How does the life of which I spoke appeal to you?"

"Oh," I cried, "to be an artist seems to me the most wonderful, the most beautiful possible life."

The *Maestro,* if he were amused at my enthusiasm, which knowing him as I did later, I doubt, at all events gave no sign.

"Then why not choose it?"

I confided my ignorance as to my finances.

"You understand, however, that the money which has paid your expenses here for the past three years is your own, an income?"

I told him that I believed so.

"It would amply suffice for your expenses in Italy; you could live very comfortably," he continued, half to himself.

"Italy!" I gasped.

This roused the *Maestro,* and he explained that the past season had been his last in America. He was returning to his native land, his beloved Florence, there to live upon the income from his savings. He would teach no more save the two pupils who were to accompany him, or if I joined them, three. All would work for a grand opera career.

I may add here that to Pratesi, grand opera was the only possible career for one gifted with a beautiful voice, and the makings of an artist. Like all Italians, for him, opera was the highest form of music.

"In Italy I can carry on your studies to the proper point, arrange your débuts, watch over your career, and prevent some of the mistakes common to the inexperienced beginner."

I do not remember what else he said. The words "career," "Italy," "début," had stirred my imagination until it spread its wings and flew far up into the clouds.

I did return to earth sufficiently to discuss a few necessary practical details. I think Pratesi, after his first few words, took my consent for granted. Well he might. What else lay before me save a return to

my plantation home? Since no one had the least claim upon my consideration, I was free to follow that will-o'-the-wisp, Fame, whithersoever her elusive, illusive light might beckon.

Strangely enough, my inherited prejudice against a stage career for a lady, all my bringing-up and education, did not raise one protesting voice when the *Maestro* pronounced that magic word, artist.

It was agreed that I should go south on the following day. The *Maestro* generously insisted upon loaning me enough money for my wants. He urged me to see, rather than write to the old lawyer who presumably had charge of my affairs.

Again fortune favored me. To my delight, when I consulted old Mr. Langdon, he informed me, with no idea that it would be accepted, that the man who had for three years farmed my plantation, had made an offer to buy the land. To the old lawyer's amazement, I declared I would accept the offer. It insured that I could carry out my plans, and a few weeks later, I sailed from New York for Italy and the unknown.

CHAPTER III

OFF FOR ITALY

NOT until I was on board the steamship did I realize that I was actually on my way to a foreign country. Our party consisted of Pratesi, a young Italian girl, Giovanna, with a beautiful contralto voice, Millie Ransom, her mother, a wealthy widow, and myself. Of Millie, Pratesi informed me:

"She will never have a great career. I told her that I would do my best to secure her a début, since her heart is set upon it. She is not talented, but she has a pretty, fresh voice. However, doubtless she will marry; perhaps one of our good-looking officers. She has quite enough *dot* for that."

Marriage thus spoken of quite shocked my youthful romanticism, but I grew accustomed to it. Pratesi never mentioned it as a prospect for Giovanna, the contralto, and me. We were to be artists, and all the better for us if we never married.

Pratesi gave me many instructions on the voyage. I must try to forget from now on that I was "an American of the United States." Although I could not yet hope to pass for an Italian, my surname and general appearance would favor my calling myself a "South American of Italian parentage."

"If you say you are a Southerner, they will understand it as South America, and let them do so. Re-

member," he warned me. Pratesi made no such suggestions to blonde Millie Ransom.

Recently, in turning over a mass of old letters, programs, etc., I came across a photograph of myself taken that last winter in Baltimore. I studied the face with interest. So this dreamy-eyed, round-faced girl was really I. The dark eyes and hair, the shape of the face and figure make me understand why, after a short time in Italy, I was always taken for an Italian. By no means strikingly pretty, yet with fairly good features, surely after all these years I may say that my figure was rounded and graceful, my eyes large, and when under the influence of excitement, brilliant, beneath long, thick, dark lashes.

We had a ship's concert, at which Millie and I sang. "Very badly," Pratesi afterwards informed us, but other passengers were not so critical. We were heartily applauded.

When at last we caught sight of Naples, on a June morning, with a hot sun in a cloudless sky, dancing on the bluest of water, it seemed to me that I was entering Paradise. I loved it at first sight; loved the gay people.

In Naples the Ransoms went to a large hotel, for they planned to do some sightseeing, but Giovanna, the *Maestro* and I pushed on at once to Florence. I can still remember that first railway journey. Everything fascinated me; the people, their dress, their vivacity. I strained my ears to catch familiar words. Already Italy seemed homelike. I smiled at the people and they smiled back at me.

Soon the Apennines rose pink in the background

against the wonderful blue sky. The villages clustered around church or castle on the hilltops made me feel that I was back in mediæval times; that at any moment the castle gates might open, and a procession of knights in armor emerge on horseback.

Before leaving America, I had purchased a thick blank book, and began on shipboard to record my impressions. This book and several successors now lie before me, with their youthful comments, descriptions, etc. I smile as I turn the pages, trying to bring back the girl who penned them; the enthusiastic, oh, so ignorant girl. Later the journals stopped. I had no time for lengthy entries, but they were succeeded by small, businesslike diaries, in which, under their dates, are noted, sometimes by me, sometimes by a secretary, the important events of my career. "First performance of *Faust,*" "Signed contract for La Scala," "Début at ——," "Musicale at the Duchess of ——'s." These continue to the present time, ending with: "Final retirement from the stage, July 28."

But to return to the journey.

When Pratesi stepped from the train in Florence, a small, wildly excited old lady rushed into his arms. This was his elder sister, whom he had not seen in years. A pretty girl stood smiling beside her, her grandchild Maria. Giovanna was claimed and borne away by a couple of elderly relatives, and I felt my first pang of loneliness. With the intuitive sympathy of Italians, Signora Cecchi hurriedly presented Maria, exclaiming with satisfaction over my ability to speak Italian. The *Maestro's* sister owned a villa at Fiesole, and it had been arranged that I accompany Pratesi

there for a few days, until a satisfactory place could be found for me.

But after several days, Signora Cecchi suggested that I should remain with her, at least for the summer. There was plenty of room, I was *simpatica,* I already loved her for her kindness. Pratesi at first demurred. He feared that I might find it difficult to adapt myself at once to Italian ways, but we overruled him. It was accordingly decided that I should remain, on terms which even to my inexperience seemed low. An unused room on the ground floor was given me for my study, I had an airy bedroom above, and soon felt quite at home.

Although the heat in Florence was intense, up here it was comfortable in the villa, even during the hot hours, for it had thick walls, stone floors, and high ceilings.

We led a simple life, rising early. After a cup of coffee and perhaps a short stroll in the fresh morning air, I was ready for work. I had a daily lesson with Pratesi. What an event it was when he gave me my first score, *Lucia,* and showed me how to underline with a blue pencil each bar of the title role, adding:

"To-morrow we begin on this from the first note."

I felt that I had actually begun my career, although the idea of learning all those words and notes quite appalled me. That was the first, but by no means the last time that I experienced that feeling. I remember when I first began studying *Isolde* I threw the score down in despair after my first hour of work. I should never be able to learn that music. Of course I did learn it, as we always do the things that we must if we are worthy of success.

CHAPTER IV

THE THRILL OF THE FIRST CONTRACT

We heard nothing of the Ransoms for several weeks, during which I was already beginning to feel at home in the villa. Then one morning a note invited me to join them for luncheon at Florence's most expensive hotel. I was surprised to learn that they were en route for Switzerland. Florence was far too hot, Mrs. Ransom explained, for Millie to remain there.

They drove out to the villa and told the *Maestro* that he might expect his pupil late in September. He made no effort to persuade them to change their plans, which rather surprised me. I said so after they left.

"My child, why worry about Miss Millie? She is not, she never has been a serious student," he remarked. "Although she has a good voice, never in the world will she be an artist."

When the Ransoms returned, they went to live in a large and popular *pension,* filled with Americans and English. Millie soon had a number of friends, and seemed to lead a life of much gayety. She was regular at her lessons, but often told me of the comments made on her singing, and wondered whether, after all, the *Maestro* were the best teacher for her. She alluded mysteriously to a certain teacher said to have great influence with managers, and mentioned various people for whom he was said to have secured engagements.

She was wavering between the desire to study with this supposedly powerful person, and the fear of offending Pratesi.

"You know Italians are so jealous, he might try to injure me, and keep me from singing," she remarked, receiving my indignant remonstrances with a superior air.

As the winter wore on, her interest became less and less in her work, but Pratesi made no sign.

"All my friends say," she confided to me, "that I should be working up a modern repertoire, but Pratesi will insist on *Linda, Rosina,* and such rubbish. I wanted to learn *Marguerite,* but he will not hear of it, although it suits my voice infinitely better."

I knew very well that Millie's objection to the roles Pratesi gave her was their technical difficulty. Her voice, though light, was not flexible, and she had not the patience to acquire agility. She would not admit this, but insisted that her voice was "naturally a dramatic soprano, and not suited to old-fashioned, florid music."

How odd it is that managers have such difficulty to find dramatic sopranos, when this variety of voice, to believe the singers themselves, is so plentiful in studios and conservatories. What becomes of all the aspirants? Some no doubt marry and settle down in comfortable homes, with only occasional allusions to the triumphs which might have been theirs had they not married. But the others? Sometimes they are found in third-rate Continental companies; sometimes they become more or less successful teachers, and for the rest? Heaven help them!

I worked that winter as I had never worked before. Towards spring, the *Maestro* sometimes brought an old friend, a retired orchestral director, once famous, to hear me sing. They would sit in a corner, talking in low tones, nodding their heads, occasionally disagreeing with apparent fierceness and frantic gesticulation. By that time, I knew Italians well enough to feel sure that the talks would end amicably.

About this time acting lessons began with another *Maestro*. Giovanna shared these, and a young man with a powerful tenor voice. We rehearsed scenes, Pratesi playing the piano, and frequently supplying bass, baritone, even minor soprano parts in his funny, yet expressive voice. Millie, too, shared these lessons, although not frequently. It was easy to see that Cortona, who had been a famous actor in his day, was not interested in her, and she resented his criticisms. She thought him hopelessly old-fashioned, and if corrected would turn sulky.

"How can I tell beforehand exactly how I shall wish to act a scene?" she would ask. "After all, it is the prima donna who counts. She should be allowed some freedom."

She further confided to me that she was studying dramatic roles now with Villani, and after pledging me to secrecy, one day she invited me to his studio for an afternoon when his pupils were to present scenes from certain operas.

A lengthy entry in my journal describes that afternoon.

Villani's studio was a large, handsome apartment in an old *palazzo,* luxuriously furnished. The pupils

were almost exclusively English and Americans. A number had fine natural voices, but I thought their singing bad. They pranced about on a stage at one end of the studio, they gesticulated, and evidently aimed at freedom in both singing and acting. Villani chatted with the invited guests, chiefly friends of the performers, smiled, praised the voice of one, the acting of another.

Millie's voice seemed to me one of the best, but I could admire neither her singing nor acting of the big, intensely dramatic duet from the Fourth Act of "The Huguenots," with an undersized, reedy-voiced English boy. She flung her arms about, she shrieked her high tones, but the performance was a shock to me. I returned to the *villino* more than ever glad that I had fallen into Pratesi's hands, even if the music that I had heard made me wish that I might study some other than the *coloratura* rôles which made up my repertoire.

One morning in late June, Pratesi announced that Giovanna and I were to accompany him to Milan the next day to sing for several people there, and for the first time he spoke of a possible contract in the near future. I asked if Millie were to be of the party, and Pratesi said no. She came to the station to see me off, and gave the explanation which Pratesi had not.

"It is entirely too hot in Milan for me to go there now. Mother and I are going to Lugano to-morrow. We would have asked you to join us, but we are staying as paying guests at Villani's villa. Don't say anything about it to Pratesi; we've simply told him that

we are going to the Lakes," she cautioned. "He would not like it. Musicians are so jealous."

Hardly had the train rolled out of the station, when Pratesi remarked:

"So she thinks Villani will get her an engagement? Well, he may, he may."

I was amazed, but later I learned that very little goes on in one studio in Italy that is not known by others in the same city. Often teachers meet and discuss their pupils in friendly fashion over coffee, commenting upon them frankly, without sparing praise for good work, or the beauty of such and such a voice.

I liked Milan, and felt at home there. I liked its alert people, even the dialect, which I soon learned to understand, even speak. Milan has none of the sentimental charm of other Italian cities, but I enjoyed the streets, the hurrying crowds. Then when I entered the lofty, dimly lit *Duomo* the contrast was overpowering. How I loved that dark, spacious interior! Not a day passed without my slipping in, if but for a moment, to revel in its beauty, and the sense of peace that it gave me.

We all stopped at a *pension* kept by a friend of one of Pratesi's Florentine friends. At meals, the long tables were surrounded by the most cosmopolitan gathering that I had yet seen. There were French, Italians, Russians, Swedes, and a beautifully dressed girl whom I recognized as American. I heard her remark one day that she had had an offer to sing second parts in a company then forming, but had declined.

"I'm going to be a prima donna or nothing," she finished in penetrating tones.

The Russian woman next me smiled slyly, remarking to her vis-a-vis:

"It is safe to say then that it will be nothing."

All through the meals, the talk was of opera, music, this or that *Maestro,* so and so's high tones, and projected opera seasons. I enjoyed it immensely, and felt that I was actually entering upon my career. Pratesi made friends with a white-haired *maestro* who was treated with deference by all, and they were soon deep in discussions of the merits and demerits of the modern school of opera.

The morning after our arrival, the *Maestro* put Giovanna and me through some vocal exercises, declared we were in bad voice, and led us forth. We accompanied him blindly, and he turned into the famous Galleria, soon to become familiar to us. He turned down a side passage, led us through a doorway, up two flights of stairs, and finally halted before a door bearing the, to us, fascinating sign: *"Agenzia Teatrale."* We entered a large, bare room whose walls were covered with photographs. Here sat a boy, yawning over a paper, and a large blonde woman, wearing much jewelry, and holding a small dog.

The boy took our names into an inner room, from which, in a moment, a youngish man, well dressed, with carefully tended large white hands, emerged. The blonde woman rose at once, but he pushed past her, and saluted the *Maestro* with much cordiality.

"To think that poor dear papa is not here to welcome you back to Italy, *carissimo maestro,"* he murmured. Pratesi made a sympathetic reply, and they exchanged a few remarks. Then, with an abrupt

change of manner, the stranger remarked: "But I must not repine. He is in *Paradiso.* Now you wish me to hear these young ladies. Will you come this way?"

He led us into a large room where there was a piano. Giovanna had begged me to sing first. The *Maestro* opened the score of *Lucia,* and we began the familiar Mad Scene. The blond man looked rather bored, but listened attentively. I forgot about him, and threw myself heart and soul into my singing, Pratesi nodding occasional approval, and when I finished, he murmured: *"Bene."*

Turning on the piano stool, he cried triumphantly: "Well, what do you say?"

Knowing him so well, I realized that I had done well. The blond agent nodded, and turning to me remarked:

"You sing very well, *Signorina.* Are you Italian?"

"Italian? *Per Bacco,* I should think so," interrupted Pratesi. "Is she not a Della Rocca of Romagna?"

Giovanna then sang, meeting with the same moderate, phlegmatic approval. The two men then held a long conversation in tones so low that we girls could not hear a word. Finally we departed.

Pratesi seemed in good spirits. Hailing a tram, he bore us off to a different part of the city. Here he called on an elderly man, and after presenting us, held another long, low-toned conversation, ending in a few words which we heard distinctly:

"I can promise nothing, *Maestro,* but it will do no

harm to come. Teatro Manzoni, then, at twelve o'clock."

We exchanged salutations and departed, Giovanna and I no wiser than before. We asked a few questions, but Pratesi merely smiled, and bade us wait.

We were in Milan about a fortnight. Each morning we went out, sometimes to sing for an agent in his office, sometimes for an impresario, in a bare theatre, looking very dingy by daylight, with a couple of gas jets flickering on the stage, the rest of the house dark. I sang the Mad Scene, or some other florid aria; Giovanna sang. We responded like automatons to Pratesi's signal, meanwhile taking in our surroundings, and discussing them at length when we were alone.

Sometimes we were complimented; sometimes the pianist murmured: *"Brava"*; the impresario nodded encouragingly; sometimes no one said a word to us, and Pratesi would break off abruptly a conversation of which we caught such phrases as: "I tell you she is unknown. Those are the only terms I would consider," or an indignant: "Not a cent," from Pratesi, which last usually meant that we left the theatre or office at once.

One noon, when the weather had been unusually hot, the theatre where we had both sung unusually stuffy, and when Pratesi had an apparently violent altercation with a fat, vulgar man, who had patted Giovanna and me on the back in an offensive manner, the *Maestro* seemed depressed as never before. He even alluded to the possibility of returning to Florence for the present. He lingered at the table longer than usual, and discussed with unusual pessimism the

future of music with his white-haired friend. As he sat there, a note was brought to Pratesi. He opened it and as he read his face changed. Hastily excusing himself, he left the room, beckoning us to follow him. In an empty *sala,* he cried excitedly:

"It has come, my children. Rejoice!"

"What has come, *Maestro?*" we cried together.

"Little geese, your engagements. Listen," and he read the note aloud. It was from one of the first agents for whom we had sung, and offered Giovanna a contract with a company leaving in a fortnight for a summer resort. A small company, with a salary in proportion, but to Giovanna it seemed a fortune. Then: "I can also inform you that Calderazzo accepts your terms for Signorina Della Rocca, and will be at my office to-morrow morning, with the contract. She will make her début as *Ines,* in *L'Africana,* and must be ready with *Lucia* if they decide to give that opera. The season opens in Rimini, August 15th; rehearsals will begin there ten days earlier."

We hugged Pratesi for joy.

The next day, with our contracts signed, we felt that we were actually artists. I was to receive a salary of eight hundred *lire,* or nearly one hundred and sixty dollars for five weeks. Pratesi had furthermore stipulated that I sing not more than four times a week.

We waited only to see Giovanna safely through her first rehearsal, then Pratesi and I returned to Florence, to work hard, for there was barely a month before my rehearsals would begin. Giovanna and I, I recollect, were amazed to discover that the very day after we had

signed our contracts, everyone in the *pension* knew all about them, and commented freely. I was considered remarkably fortunate, several assuring me that I might have thought myself doing well had I secured such a contract after a full year of experience in smaller towns.

It was during our stay in Milan that a wildly enthusiastic letter arrived from Millie. She had been engaged to sing *Marguerite* in *Faust,* with a company for Como. She was delighted. A manager, a friend of Villani, had stopped for a call on that *maestro.* "He insisted that his friend hear me," Millie wrote, "and after my first number, the Jewel Song, the impresario engaged me." She ended by urging me to study with Villani, who evidently could do more for his pupils than Pratesi. "Can you not see for yourself? He is old-fashioned, and has been so long in America that he has lost touch with Italian conditions. Think it over. I would be glad to speak to Villani for you. I have already told him that you have a pretty voice."

Loyal as I was to Pratesi, it was hardly strange that for a moment I wondered if Millie were right. I knew that my voice was better than hers, that I was a better actress, yet she, apparently, had secured an engagement at first hearing, while I, after singing many times, was still without a contract. In my temporary discouragement, I even wondered if Pratesi was wrong in his opinion of my ability. Did I lack that indefinable something, call it temperament, magnetism, what you will, without which not even beauty of voice will lift one to the very summits of success?

I had been reading the letter out on the small balcony of the *pension,* Pratesi sitting opposite, apparently absorbed in a paper. But he had a way of surprising one. As I folded the letter, he looked up, and asked quizzically:

"The letter is from Miss Millie, is it not?"

I replied that it was, and told her news.

"So she is to make her début as *Marguerite?* She never studied that rôle with me."

"Do you think it will suit her?" I could not refrain from asking.

"We shall see. When do rehearsals begin?"

"In about a fortnight, in Como."

"Did she mention the manager's name?"

I looked through the letter.

"Signor Grassi."

"Grassi? H'm. There are many of that name. Let me see."

He went into the drawing-room of the *pension,* and returned with a theatrical paper. After scanning its columns, he found a small item announcing that the celebrated impresario, Ernesto Grassi, would shortly inaugurate a season of opera at Como, when *Faust, Il Trovatore* and possibly a new opera by a young composer would be sung. It further announced that Eduardo Conti of Padova would be the tenor of the company.

The *Maestro's* smile broadened.

"Splendido! Perfetto!" he murmured. "That should indeed be a successful season for our friend Grassi."

"What do you mean, *Maestro?*" I asked in bewilderment.

He chuckled.

"Merely that with a tenor, a soprano and a composer, all ready to pay, it should not be difficult for the *impresario* to make a little money, honest man."

"You mean?" Still I did not understand.

"Of course they are all paying, child," he explained kindly. "As for young Conti, he has been buying engagements for the past two years. He was a promising young merchant, I understand, until someone told him that he had a voice. He came to Tramonti. You remember my friend, Tramonti?"

I nodded. He had called at the villa, and I had sung for him several times.

"Tramonti told him that he had no voice, and advised him to stick to business. But no, he would be an opera singer. He found a teacher more than willing to give him lessons as long as the boy's money lasted. Since then he has sung in six or seven theaters, always buying an engagement, usually *protestato,* but in any case never securing another engagement without buying it. Now he has fallen into the hands of Grassi."

"But do you suppose that Millie, too, has paid for her engagement?" I asked. Pratesi had never before alluded to such business, and I was amazed.

"Certainly I suppose so. My child, you must know that she is incapable of giving a good performance of *Marguerite.* Her voice is of pretty quality, but only suited to the lightest music. By the time the trio is reached it will be finished, even if she lasts through the Church Scene."

"Then what will happen?" I asked distressed, my momentary jealousy forgotten.

The *Maestro* shook his head.

"The best thing that could happen would be for her, and that silly mother of hers, to give up all idea of an operatic career, for which the girl is not in the least fitted. But we shall see," and he picked up his paper again, as though there were nothing more to be said.

"Do you suppose she will sing *Leonora,* too?" I persisted.

"No, I do not suppose that she will," he remarked dryly.

I wrote Millie at once, congratulating her, and saying how anxious I was for further particulars. I thought it might be possible to go to Como for the opening performance, but when that day came, Pratesi and I were back in Florence, hard at work.

I read the theatrical paper for which he subscribed diligently. Some days after my return, a short paragraph announced that the season under the management of Grassi had opened in Como, with *Faust.* Three or four singers were mentioned, including the tenor, Conti, but there was no name that resembled Millie's. The prima donna, mildly praised, was a certain Fanelli. I showed the paragraph to Pratesi, and asked if she could be Millie. He smiled, and informed me that Fanelli was a woman of forty, fairly well known in the small Italian theaters.

"Then what has happened to Millie? Will she sing later in the season?"

"Undoubtedly she has been *protestata,*" and then he

explained that in Italy, at the first or second rehearsal, the orchestral director has the right to "protest" a singer, or in other words, to object to his or her singing the rôle for which cast, on the grounds that it would injure the artistic completeness of the performance for which he, the director, would be held responsible. Pratesi further informed me that this privilege was sometimes abused, used to gratify a petty grudge or jealousy, although seldom in the case of an artist of established reputation. "The director probably found her unsuited to the rôle, and refused to let her sing it."

"But if she had paid to sing?"

"What has that to do with it from the director's point of view?" asked Pratesi. "Of course, if he and Grassi agreed between them that it was to happen——"

"Would they dare?" I cried indignantly.

"My dear Luisa, a man of that stamp would dare anything. He comes out of it apparently quite well. He was satisfied with Miss Millie's voice, believed that the director would be, but it seems he is not, etc. Of course Miss Millie is indignant, demands her money back, but I hardly think she will get it. If she does, I congratulate her. She will be the first to get the better of Grassi."

I must have looked as horrified as I felt, for he continued:

"These are ugly facts, my child, but there are dishonorable managers, directors, as well as artists, and it is well for you to know this. The public sometimes talks of the caprices, the unreasonableness of singers, but they know little of the difficulties with which these have to contend, nor how necessary it is for them to

be shrewd business men and women. I could easily have bought you appearances, and far better ones than with a cheap summer company at Como. I would not do it, and with my consent you will never sing on such terms. If you are not worth a small salary you are worth nothing. Remember that. Experience must be bought, and it is absurd for a beginner to expect a salary such as would be paid to an experienced artist. But it is not necessary to pay for an appearance, and it is extremely foolish to do so. You will usually find that one who pays for a first appearance, even if not *protestata,* continues to pay. The reputation that she is willing goes before her; she is passed on from one manager to another, commissions divided, etc., and it will be hard for her to secure bona fide engagements afterwards, no matter how genuine her talent. So take my advice to heart, child."

I followed Pratesi's advice, and never have I consented to buy an appearance, although I fancy, were I to tell half I know from my own and others' experiences, of offers made, even those who consider themselves well informed in operatic affairs would be amazed.

It was not until late in the autumn that I saw Millie again. Although I gave her a number of opportunities to speak of her engagement, she avoided the subject. Finally, perhaps somewhat maliciously, I asked her about her début. She hesitated a moment, flushed, then said:

"Oh, my dear Louise, don't speak to me of that awful experience. It was too dreadful! Such a horrid, dirty little theater, the company quite impossible.

I realized at the first rehearsal that I never could stand it. You should have seen the tenor, to say nothing of hearing him. Not a single good note in his voice. And yet they let him sing." She bit her lip; evidently she had forgotten herself, but I said nothing.

"I told mother that it was impossible, and we left the next day," she resumed. "I blame Villani severely. We had words about it. I am going to Germany. I feel that there is more opportunity there for young artists. Italians are all so jealous and mercenary. I met a German, a composer, this summer, and he has promised to help me. He tells me that he knows I will have great success in Germany."

Millie did go to Germany, but what her experiences there were I never knew. Pratesi had been quite right in his surmise, as we afterwards learned. Millie had been protested by the orchestra director, and she and her mother had made a scene, threatening all sorts of things, appeals to the American consul, the Minister, the Government at home, but without avail. I believe that Millie sang in several German theaters, but I never saw her again until years after, in America. I was filling a concert engagement in a middle western city, when I was surprised to recognize my student friend among the women who came to my dressing-room afterwards. She greeted me cordially, if a bit patronizingly, and regretted that my departure almost immediately after the concert prevented her from entertaining in my honor. Someone told me that she was a prominent club woman, and frequently lectured on music study in Europe.

CHAPTER V

MY DEBUT

DURING the few days that we remained in Milan after signing my contract, I ordered my first costumes, to me an exciting detail. Another matter was arranged by Pratesi for me. After we had returned to Florence a copy of Signor F's paper arrived, and after the *Maestro* had opened it, he showed me an item. It ran, translated, about as follows:

"Signorina Luisa Della Rocca, a young South American soprano, of Italian parentage, whose beautiful voice has been much admired since her arrival in Italy, has been engaged to sing the rôle of *Ines,* in "L'Africana," with which Opera Signor Calderazzo will open his season in Rimini, the latter part of August."

I was delighted, although my enthusiasm was a trifle dashed by learning that this was no spontaneous tribute to my voice, but in accordance with an agreement made by Pratesi with his friend, whereby, upon payment of a certain amount annually, the paper would be friendly. This was my first, but by no means my last experience with purchased *réclame.* The *Maestro* did not believe in much of this kind of advertising, but explained that a certain amount was necessary, and informed me that he had made a good bargain. "Good

notices in that paper will mean more to you than you realize," he told me, "for you must become known to get good contracts. This first one is only a beginning."

Back in Florence, we settled down to hard work. Not the slightest mistake would Pratesi pass over.

"Because you are a beginner and a foreigner," he explained, "there must be nothing with which the director can find fault. You must know your rôle so perfectly that nothing can confuse or upset you."

Especially did we rehearse the concerted numbers, Pratesi singing baritone, bass, soprano, all parts in turn. Cortona came for the acting, the *Maestro* still taking the other parts, as we moved about the studio. Despite my desire to do well, at times I could hardly keep from laughing when Pratesi now scorned me as *Selica,* now languished as *Nelusco,* or sternly commanded as my operatic father, giving me the musical cues in his funny, cracked voice. Never had he been so difficult to please, but I knew that this was merely because he wished me to do my best.

Until the day I left for Rimini, the *Maestro* had intended to accompany me, but to his dismay, he, usually so hale and hearty, was taken ill, and the journey was out of the question for him. I fear his temperature rose as a result of his worrying about me. He gave me minute directions for every possible contingency.

I was so excited that the long day's journey seemed interminable, and tired as I was, I could not sleep that night. The first rehearsal was called for the following morning. I made a careful toilet, and went to the theater. After walking half around the building, I

finally discovered the stage door. An old man, in a shabby uniform, sat within the doorway. He told me that no one had yet arrived, and I went in, and onto the empty stage. Very big and dirty it looked, and the theater itself looked very large, with three tiers of boxes.

My experience of theaters had been limited. During my stay in Baltimore, I had gone perhaps a dozen times, had heard "Trovatore" and "La Traviata" sung by a cheap company. The *Maestro* had taken me to hear "Lucia," "Norma," and again "La Traviata," in Florence. I remember the sudden chill of terror which overcame me that summer morning, when I stood in the big, empty theater, and realized that I, an inexperienced beginner, was shortly to appear on that stage as a professional. I had a wild desire to fly while yet there was time, and before I disgraced myself and my dear old *Maestro*.

A voice at my side startled me. It was only the old doorman, come to chat. He told me of various past opera seasons, since he had occupied his present position, and before that, when he had sung in the chorus. He informed me that the Rimini public was very hard to please—later I learned that almost all Italian cities make this their boast—but added kindly: "Still, when they do like a singer they are very enthusiastic," and something made me hope that he believed they would like me. To this had I come.

The arrival of several men checked his garrulity. One of these came up and addressed me by name, and I then remembered seeing him in the theater on one of the occasions when I had sung in Milan. He in-

formed me that he was the stage manager, and introduced his companions, the *répétiteur,* and my stage father, the Admiral. The latter was a swarthy individual, with none too immaculate linen. Soon others arrived. They stared at me, and I stared back with interest, for these were to be my companions for the immediate future.

A stout woman, over-dressed, with large diamond earrings, and many rings on her stubby fingers, proved to be the prima donna. Almost all of the others knew her, and save for a slight, dapper man—the leading tenor, the stage manager told me—all crowded around her, while she laughed and talked, with many gestures, and familiar pats. After one glance of cool scrutiny, she ignored me. A rather pretty woman introduced herself to me as "the mezzo," and asked my nationality, to which I was careful to say: "Italian." She was about to ask more questions when a buzz: *"Ecco il Maestro,"* ran from one to another, and from the side of the stage advanced a man of about forty, with a clever, cynical face, the conductor.

I studied him with interest, as those who knew him hurried to greet him. Of actual rehearsing that morning there was none. A discussion of *tempi* with him on the part of soprano, tenor, and leading baritone, a big, fine-looking man, the planning of some business with the stage manager, and we were dismissed as the chorus began filing on the stage. Just as I was leaving, the *Maestro* seemed suddenly aware of my existence. Beckoning to me, he remarked that he hoped I knew my rôle, for he had no time to waste on beginners.

This unkindness before the others, all listening with

interest, roused my pride, and none too deferentially, I fancy, I remarked that I thought he would not be obliged to waste any time on me, and sailed out. The unkempt basso followed me, and after we had left the stage, murmured kindly:

"Don't mind the *Maestro*. He is always cross in the morning," and with real kindness, offered to go over the trio which he and I had with the leading baritone. I thanked him, and assured him that it was not necessary.

The sun was high, the narrow streets uncomfortably warm, so I returned to the hotel. But I was too restless to keep quiet, so, as soon as the lengthening shadows of afternoon promised a slight coolness, I started out to explore the city.

Carriages and pedestrians were all proceeding in one direction, which I followed. After crossing the railway tracks, I came into a broad avenue lined with trees, at the further end of which I caught a glimpse of the sea. Soon I reached a sandy beach, and had my first view of the Adriatic, lying calm and peaceful beneath the rays of the setting sun. I stayed there until nearly dark. I had found a friend. Almost every day of my stay in Rimini, I went to the beach, and sitting or strolling there, I fancied that the gentle plash of the waves was the sympathetic murmur of my friend, to whom I confided my hopes and ambitions, my discouragements or indignation, when unpleasantnesses occurred in the theater.

As a matter of fact, from what I have seen and heard later, I had a far easier time than many débutantes, and received more consideration. I did not

know until later that this was due, not only to my careful preparation, and the ability which now I may surely claim, but also to the fact that the agent through whom I secured the engagement was influential, and apt to make trouble for those who interfered with artists in whom he was interested. It appeared that he was interested in me, saw possibilities of making money from my commissions, so he aided me more than I realized at the time. He was known all over Italy, and in South America, and had great influence.

The second rehearsal was devoted to parts of the opera in which I did not figure, but I enjoyed watching and listening.

On the third morning, the *Maestro* announced that he would begin at the beginning. After the briefest of piano preludes, I stood at the back of the stage, and began the few bars of recitative with which the opera opens. At my side was the mezzo, the *Anna,* faithful female confidante, without whom no old-time opera is complete. To my disgust, my voice shook perceptibly as I began, and the *Maestro* looked bored, as he stood by the piano watching me. But by the time I was singing the *romanza,* I had recovered myself, and knew that I was singing as Pratesi would have me. The prima donna stared, the tenor audibly murmured: *"Brava!"* When I began the final cadenza, the pianist evidently had not expected anything so elaborate, for he struck the final bars without waiting, but I ignored this, and executed the cadenza holding the final high C as long as even Pratesi could have wished. The basso, my stage father, and the big, good-looking baritone who was singing *Nelusco* applauded; even the *Maestro*

nodded. The trio with the Admiral and the leading basso went well, and when I withdrew by an imaginary exit, I felt quite happy.

The rest of the rehearsal was taken up chiefly with the chorus, who seemed to drive the conductor almost to madness. I had no opportunity of hearing soprano or tenor, as they rehearsed their big scenes alone with the *Maestro*.

But the next day, when we tried the septette, the finale to the second act, upon which Pratesi had spent so much time with me, she sang almost at full voice. It was, despite some notable defects, a fine voice, and she had decided dramatic ability. *Ines* begins this septette, and for a number of bars there is practically no accompaniment, so unless all voices are in accord, the effect is deplorable. I believe I could have sung that septette in my sleep. The men's voices entered correctly, but the prima donna and I clashed horribly. The *Maestro* rapped sharply with his baton, and we began again with no better results. He tore his hair, and appealed to high heaven to know why he must suffer thus. The prima donna muttered something to her neighbor about amateurs. I was furious. The third time it was even worse, for this time one of the men came in wrong. A glare from the soprano decided me. She had never spoken to me, but now I turned, and said quite distinctly:

"Your first note is *si bémol,* not *la,* Madame."

She glared, but I stared back coolly, the tenor chuckled, even the dignified basso smiled. The soprano cried furiously:

"Perhaps you know the part better than I do?"

"Certainly I know it," I replied, and made her still more angry by singing her opening bars correctly. The *Maestro,* who had been absolutely silent, now remarked sarcastically:

"You hear, *Signora?* Those are the notes you should sing. Now perhaps we can go on," and we did, and sang the septette to the end without interruption. Only then did I suspect that the soprano had deliberately tried to confuse me, and my friendly "father" later confirmed my suspicions.

"Of course the *Maestro* knew perfectly well who was making the mistake," he explained. "But they both thought that you being a beginner"—everyone seemed to know this—"might get confused, and go to pieces. Then he could have had an excuse to protest you, as she has been at him to do from the first. But she will not try it again."

"What have I done? Why should she wish him to protest me?" I asked in dismay.

He laughed.

"You have too good a voice."

"But my part is a small one," I protested, half flattered, half alarmed.

"Yes, but you have it all your own way in the septette, and your voice shows off well on those high notes. But the *Maestro* admires musicianship in singers, and I think you will have no more trouble."

He proved to be right. I was treated with more respect by the *Maestro,* the prima donna ignored me, but the others showed me a certain friendliness which had been lacking before; they admitted me into their ranks, as one of them. The tenor praised my voice,

and one day the *Maestro* informed the company that my diction was the best of any, "although she is a foreigner."

One little incident of those days has remained in my memory. It was, at the time, such a revelation. I had studied not only my own part, but the entire libretto of the opera, and had tried to learn as much as possible about the action and period, even reading books about Vasco da Gama. During one of the rehearsals, while *Nelusco* and *Selica* were going through one of their big scenes, the mezzo, standing beside me, suddenly giggled:

"Isn't Gregoria funny when he makes eyes at Bianca? I wonder why he does."

"But he is in love with her, and unhappy," I replied, thinking only of the story of the opera.

"In love with her?" she asked. *"Davvero?* We all thought he was still in love with that actress. They were together in Venice. So you think he is in love with Bianca now! I wonder."

I explained.

"Oh, you are talking about the opera," she drawled in disappointment. "Oh I know nothing about that. It's quite enough if I know my own rôle," and she turned away.

I was amazed, but later such ignorance never surprised me.

Two days before the opening, although barely recovered, Pratesi arrived. He accompanied me to the final rehearsal, introduced himself to the *Maestro,* and apparently put him in a great good humor. He disappeared from the hotel for an entire afternoon,

and laughingly refused to give an account of himself. Later, I learned that he had done some clever wire-pulling; had met prominent citizens, members of the opera committee, etc.

But I must not pass too briefly over that momentous début. How excited and nervous I was all day, worrying for fear I should be hoarse, irritable. When I went to the theater I was coldly sure that I should fail.

Mechanically I made up my face as best I could, and with the aid of an old woman employed in the theater, for I had no maid, donned my first act costume. I was quite disgusted with my appearance, as I surveyed myself in a mirror. My eyes looked dull, I wished that I had never undertaken to sing.

Suddenly there was a knock. At first I did not recognize in the dark-skinned, savage looking man in fantastic costume who entered, the baritone, *Nelusco.*

"Well, *in bocca lupo!*" he cried blithely, that untranslatable Tuscan expression used among artists. Literally it means: in the mouth of the wolf. There is a very prevalent superstition against an outspoken wish for good fortune. It is to court misfortune. If the uninformed do wish an artist good luck, many are greatly distressed. Then one will see fingers crossed, the devout cross themselves, and the particular fetish produced; a horse shoe, a Neapolitan coral charm, an elephant, any odd thing which its owner fancies brings good fortune.

"Coraggio!" he continued. "I believe you will do well to-night, if only to spite Bianca. It looks as though the theater will be full, and the *Maestro* is in

a good temper. He won sixty francs from me this afternoon."

He had touched the right chord. I *would* do well, if only to rob the prima donna of the satisfaction my failure would give her. The signal for my entry came, and I rose with fresh courage. As I passed along the corridor to the stage, the soprano was executing runs and trills to warm up her voice; further down came high sustained tones from the tenor, and a deep bass growl from the room where the basso was arraying himself as *Dom Pedro*.

In the wings, I found my cheery "father," calm and collected. Singing was a mere routine to him now. I was joined by the mezzo, my maid in the opera. She looked pretty, but declared that she was terribly nervous. I was rather contemptuous over nerves for one who had but a few phrases to sing until I suddenly realized that those lines served as my own cues, and wrongly sung might throw me out. Already I had the prima donna trait of thinking solely of what would affect her.

My terror returned for one moment, as the curtain rose, and *Anna* and I began our conventional stroll down to the footlights. Very large the house looked, and not half filled. No one but myself attached much importance to that first scene. The orchestra was playing, and suddenly stopped. My moment had arrived. My first notes sounded very faint to me; *Anna* replied, the *Maestro's* face was serene. I evidently had not sung badly. Gradually my confidence returned, and by the time I had begun the *romanza* I had forgotten nerves, and sang the cadenza with calm assur-

ance. I heard a little burst of applause; my first applause in opera. Then the *Admiral* and *Dom Pedro* came on. While they were singing, I glanced around the house. People were coming in now in numbers, with the noise to which I became accustomed in Italian theaters, so that later, when I sang in Germany, where there was utter silence during performances, and late comers must wait outside, it seemed at first very odd, then delightful.

When I left the stage I was so composed that I even joked with *Nelusco,* who stood in the wings with the prima donna. She actually bade me good evening. She was very handsome in her striking costume, much better made up than I. As for me, I could now hardly wait for my next entry. Too excited to remain in my dressing-room, I stood in the wings for the next act, until I came on in the finale. The septette went well, although *Selica* sang at the top of her voice. But if she really tried to drown me out she did not succeed, thanks to my telling high notes.

After the long passage, almost a solo for *Ines* since the other voices have only a few notes to sing, my voice rang out, fresh and clear as I could hear. I held the high C sharp, and as I finished a burst of applause for a moment drowned the other voices. After the act, we all came out several times in response to hearty applause; the prima donna, tenor and baritone took several curtains, and as I was leaving the wings there were scattered calls: "Della Rocca! Della Rocca!" and to my amazement, the stage manager pushed me forward to join the others. I was so happy that the prima donna's muttered: "I did not know that you had

so many friends in Rimini, or is it your *claque?*" could not dampen my spirits. It was quite unusual for *Ines* to be thus distinguished, my friendly baritone informed me.

Ines has but little more to sing. A prayer with chorus, a few bits in the fourth act, then, thanks to cuts which shorten the excessive length of this opera, I was free.

Pratesi brought several men to my dressing-room after the second act, and I exerted myself to respond affably to their congratulations. I had not done badly for a débutante, Pratesi told me, but his radiant face atoned for the moderate praise. Later, the friendly basso came to add his congratulations, and brought his wife, a kindly soul, who had herself been a singer. They were very friendly to me during the entire Rimini season.

Pratesi was obliged to return to Fiesole the following day, and they took me under their wing. They retailed gossip of singers past and present, and thanks to them, I was less lonely than might otherwise have been the case. The prima donna was civil, but we had nothing in common, and she and the mezzo were too busy with men friends to waste time on me. I think the baritone would have been only too friendly with a little encouragement, but some instinct made me keep him at arm's length. He and I were the only members of the company at my hotel, the best one. The prima donna had rooms in town, the *Maestro* stopped with a brother who kept a shop, others were at inns inside which I would not even have entered, or they rented rooms in cheap localities.

The season went on uneventfully. The only other opera sung was one in which I had no rôle, and on those evenings I usually went to the theater, partly from choice, partly because there was nothing else for me to do.

The chief amusement was afforded by the continual quarrels of prima donna and tenor, usually carried on at the top of their lungs, in dressing-rooms, or corridors of the theater.

If the soprano had less applause than the tenor, she would accuse him of spoiling her scene; if she came out ahead, he would violently upbraid her for cutting off his high tones, and so it went on, the others listening amusedly.

The end of the season came, and we bade each other farewell. Several were joining another company immediately; others alluded to "splendid contracts" which merely awaited their signatures; others, like myself, had nothing in prospect. I packed my trunk, and took the first possible train for Florence, vaguely surprised that as yet no manager had offered me a contract. I had one letter from an agent, suggesting that I call upon him when next I came to Milan. This, a bunch of newspaper notices, several programs, my costumes, and less than two hundred francs were all that remained of my first engagement.

CHAPTER VI

"A REAL PRIMA DONNA"

My return to Fiesole was like a real home-coming. Pratesi had reported my success, as he pronounced it, although he had plenty of criticism for me, but I must tell Signora Cecchi and Maria all about it, to the least details. There was a visit to a photographer for my first professional pictures, one of which, taken in the court dress, faded and yellow, I still have.

Then I settled down to the old routine, quite as if I had never been for a brief time a professional. I worked hard, learned a couple of new rôles, practiced all my old ones, and occasionally sang for various people in Florence, who used to discuss my voice and its possibilities before me, quite as though I were a deaf mute.

Of social life I had none. Occasionally, if a notable actor or singer visited Florence, Pratesi took Maria and me to the theater. I saw Salvini twice, and was thrilled by his impassioned acting.

From time to time, communications from Milan musical agents arrived with offers, but none of these were, Pratesi declared, worth considering. Some offered "splendid opportunities with famous artists" in return for certain sums of money to be paid by me. These were torn up unanswered. One, offering a

month's engagement in Turin, occasioned some correspondence, but was finally rejected, Pratesi deeming the manager unreliable. His suspicions were later justified, when the man decamped after the first week, leaving the company stranded.

What I should have done in those early days of my career without Pratesi I often wonder. I was so young, inexperienced, a foreigner, that I should have made many mistakes from which his cool good judgment and knowledge of operatic conditions saved me. He was absolutely disinterested, too, and had no desire to exploit me for his own sake, as do some teachers with their pupils.

Giovanna, after her first engagement, had gone to Calabria for a season.

"I could not have accepted such an engagement for you," Pratesi explained. "You could not have stood the life, in tiny towns, where there are no good hotels."

As I had but brief glimpses of Giovanna for some years, I may mention now that she did remarkably well, and was on the road to become one of the foremost contraltos of her day, when she fell in love with a wealthy South American, whom she met while singing in Buenos Aires. She married him, and retired from the stage. Years later, when I sang in that city, Giovanna, gorgeously dressed, blazing with diamonds, nightly occupied one of the best boxes in the opera house, and entertained me lavishly. I played with her fat little black-eyed babies, and sometimes almost envied her.

Late in the spring after my début I received an offer which Pratesi thought worth accepting. It was for the

Carnival season in Padua, and besides *Ines,* and the *Queen* in "The Huguenots," there was a chance that I might be called upon to sing *Lucia.* I spent what then seemed quite a large sum for costumes and stage jewels.

Again I wonder what I should have done without a small, independent income. I should have been forced either to borrow money from a money lender, decline the contract, or go the way of so many unfortunate girls, who have learned that mere talent seldom is sufficient to win fame. How many young artists, if they have not taken the mis-called "easiest way," and given their good names for careers, have staggered beneath debts which required years to pay, or have been exploited by some agent at ruinous commissions. The real history of many a young artist is pitiful.

My season in Padua was at first uneventful. I had success. I was obliged to snub the stage manager, because of his undesirable attentions, and this might have made matters difficult for me, had not the musical director, an old man, rather like Pratesi, liked me because, as he frankly informed the others, I always knew my music.

Few knew how really inexperienced I was. Pratesi had told agents that "although comparatively unknown in Italy," I had "a great reputation for one so young in South America." We had laughed together over this, but doubtless it was quite as true as some stories others told of their experiences.

Padua is a quiet, rather dull University city, and my days passed uneventfully at first. "L'Africana" was not a great success, but "The Huguenots" was a fiasco.

The soprano cast for *Valentine* was even less suited to the rôle than to *Selica*. Her voice was worn, and on the first night, when, in the big duet with *Raoul* she got off the key, she could not recover herself, and her fate was sealed for that city.

I was in the wings, waiting to leave the theater, when there came the shrill sound of hisses. There were even calls from the top gallery of: "Good night, *Valentine!*" "You deserve better, *Raoul!*" "Let her go out and be shot instead of you!"

The curtain was rung down before the act finished. I shrank behind a piece of scenery as the prima donna staggered off the scene. It was pitiable. Tears rolled down her cheeks, sobs shook her fat form. I hurried home without speaking to anyone. As one of the company I felt involved. The singer was a kindly soul; I liked her.

Early the next morning, a note was brought, requesting me to come to the theater, prepared to rehearse *Lucia*. I was frightened. The idea of singing again in that theater half paralyzed me.

I found most of the company assembled on the stage, discussing the previous night's fiasco. The tenor alone was unsympathetic. He was furious with the unfortunate soprano for "spoiling his big scene." A singer of minor rôles quite had the center of the stage, for it appeared that she had helped the prima donna to disrobe, don her street attire, and had then accompanied her to the hotel, and remained for the night.

"Where is she now?" asked one, lowering his voice, and glancing around.

"Gone back to Milan."

"And did you see the notices on the theater?" asked another.

It appeared that these stated that the theater would be closed for that evening, "owing to the illness of Signora V."

"And when will it reopen?" they asked, eyeing me.

The beginning of the rehearsal found me rather uncertain as to voice. The tenor looked despairing. We began the duet with him singing barely audibly. Evidently he looked upon the rehearsal as wasted time. This enraged me, and suddenly I sang at full voice, and at my best. The tenor sang louder, and when we finished there was a murmur of applause.

The musical director said nothing, but turned to the Wedding Scene. All went well; I had quite recovered. Even the famous sextette. Director and theater manager then carried on an excited conversation in low tones, and a full rehearsal with orchestra was announced for the following morning. The others were then dismissed, and I was asked to remain.

"We propose to give *Lucia* on Friday night," the director informed me. "You will be ready?"

I assented. I was now quite ready.

"As you have never sung the rôle, it will be well to go over the Mad Scene with piano, before you rehearse with orchestra."

If I knew any piece of music, I knew that Mad Scene. After singing it, the manager applauded me heartily, and declared that he now anticipated a real success. Afterwards I learned that I was the only member of the company who had not sung his or her rôles many times. Otherwise the management would

never have dared give an opera with but one orchestral rehearsal. Usually in Italy we had from five to seven for every opera in which I sang.

That afternoon, when I went for a cup of chocolate to the famous *pasticceria* frequented by the *élite* and by prosperous University students, huge posters on the theater announced that it would reopen on Friday evening, with Signorina Della Rocca as *Lucia.* For the first time I was a real prima donna. For the first time the real success of an opera depended upon me.

I was proud, and when the waiter who served me asked: "Is it true, Signorina, that you are la Della Rocca?" and I assented, I felt still prouder. The waiter hovered near, save when he was busy telling people at other tables of my identity. He told me that he hoped to be at the theater. He had a brother in the chorus, and hoped to get a ticket from him. I wrote a few lines on a visiting card, and gave it to him, remarking:

"I think if you present this you will get two seats."

My first request to a management for a pass!

The orchestral rehearsal the next morning went about as such usually do. That is to say, with frequent stopping to correct orchestra or chorus, while we principals stood about in the entrances and chatted. Then came our turn. The baritone and I were the only ones who made no mistakes.

We were in the theater until nearly four o'clock that afternoon, and I for one had taken nothing but a roll and cup of coffee.

The performance went smoothly. The tenor was in good voice, and he and I were recalled several times

after the first act, but the gallery was not too enthusiastic.

"They are waiting for the Mad Scene," he whispered maliciously, as we returned to bow before the curtain. "That is what they came to hear, so look out."

"I am not afraid of that," I replied, with confidence half feigned. Meanwhile, we smiled at each other, at the audience, hand in hand, apparently the best of friends.

The sextette was encored, although it had not gone very well, but that was customary. The Mad Scene arrived, and I advanced to the footlights to execute my musical ravings, while the assembled wedding guests retired up stage, with that bored indifference to poor *Lucia's* sufferings which is the correct chorus attitude. I suppose if they acted as persons of ordinary humanity might be expected to act, they would be accused of "stealing the scene" from the prima donna, than which nothing can make the artist more furious.

My voice floated out over the footlights, seeming very small to me, for I was still too inexperienced to realize that this meant that it was carrying well in the theater. But when I finished, there was an instant of silence, and then a roar of applause. The men in boxes and parquet applauded—women in Italy very seldom applaud—but from the gallery came: *"Bis! Bis! Brava,* Della Rocca!"

Finally the *maestro* raised his baton, and we began again at the place which Pratesi had long ago indicated as the proper one for the encore. I was recalled before the curtain many times, and later a number of

people came to my dressing-room, including my fellow artists not on the stage. All congratulated me, shook my hand, or kissed me, and I believe those were the happiest moments of my life.

It was late when I wakened the next morning. I ordered coffee and the papers. The waiter congratulated me, the proprietor of the hotel sent me a beautiful rose from his garden, with a card of congratulations, and expressing the pleasure he felt in entertaining so distinguished a young prima donna. The papers treated me more than kindly. One notice was so flattering that I was surprised, until one of my fellow artists informed me that the newspaper proprietor was also the owner of the theater. I cut out my notices, and sent Pratesi a telegram, using the word triumph to describe my appearance.

The opera was repeated that night, again on Sunday, the most popular night in Italy, when the house was packed. I sang the rôle eleven times, frequently to crowded houses, and as receipts increased the manager grew more and more affable. The company now treated me with deference. Had I not saved the season?

I had written Pratesi that it seemed wise to stop in Milan for a few days, after the season closed, but early in the morning following my last performance, I was aroused. A telegram from him bade me leave at once for Florence. "Lose no time," was added, and since these words added meant an extra expense, I knew that it must be urgent.

Pratesi met me at the station, and to my surprise,

escorted me at once to a hotel. Only when we were in my room did he relieve my curiosity.

"Can you sing *Lucia* to-morrow night?"

I stared.

"There will be no possibility of a rehearsal," he continued. "The *maestro* will meet you at the theater in the morning, and go over the *tempi.* Will you do it?"

"Of course."

Pratesi nodded.

"Good. That is settled. Now eat your supper, and get a good night's rest. I will call for you in the morning about ten."

"*Maestro,* wait a moment," I laughed. "Where am I to sing?"

"Here, little goose. That is all I shall tell you to-night."

Pratesi came the next morning, still uncommunicative. We drove to the theater, where I had been several times as one of an audience. Big posters announced that the rôle of *Lucia* would be sung that evening by the brilliant *soprano leggiera,* Luisa Della Rocca, fresh from her triumphs in Padua. I glanced at Pratesi, but he merely patted my hand.

Some people were assembled on the stage, and Pratesi introduced the *maestro,* who presented several artists, the stage manager, and an elderly man, the impresario of the company. We hummed over a few bars to get the *tempi* of my chief numbers, then Pratesi sent me back to the hotel to rest.

That evening brought me another triumph. I was

recalled seven times after the Mad Scene, and Pratesi beamed on me.

"Now you are a real prima donna," was his first comment.

In a quiet corner of the restaurant where he took me for supper he finally told me the story of my engagement.

"You remember, I tried to get you this engagement in the first place," he began. "But no, you had not had enough experience, they must have someone with an established reputation, and they engaged Zanetti. She is a famous *Lucia,* and I was surprised that they could get her. There was a reason. She was in love with the tenor, that fool who sang to-night. But four days before the opening they had a violent quarrel, and she departed. The management then opened with *Faust,* which was not a success. Meanwhile, Villani got to work, and persuaded them to try a pupil, a young Spanish girl. She had a good voice. I heard her at rehearsal, but no brains. When she came to the Mad Scene she had sung herself out, and was hoarse. But Villani got hold of the company's chief backer, wined and dined him, and persuaded him to give the girl another trial. Odd, too, for I don't believe she has any money. Probably there were other reasons. Hm!" and Pratesi checked himself abruptly. He ignored theatrical scandals as much as possible.

"You may be sure I had not been idle meantime," he resumed. "I told everyone of your great success in Padua, showing them your notices; in short, my dear Luisa, I made a nuisance of myself. I worried the musical director and manager until they admitted that

it might have been better had they engaged you in the first place.

"I never witnessed a more utter failure than the second performance of *Lucia.* The girl broke down before she had sung ten bars of the Mad Scene. They had to ring down the curtain. Then I went to that intelligent one, the manager, and spoke freely. Only a real success can save your season. By great good fortune, Della Rocca closes her season in Padua to-night. If I telegraph her you can give *Lucia* again with a real singer. I gave my word as a musician that they would be satisfied with your singing, and agreed that if you were not a success they need not pay you a *soldo.* I was not sure what the season might have done to your voice, but it was a chance worth taking. They agreed that I should send for you."

He paused for breath, then:

"You did even better than I expected."

Dear Pratesi! How cleverly he had managed, and so I told him.

"Your contract is all right now," he continued. "You will have three or four more appearances as *Lucia,* and to-night they asked about another opera. I suggested "La Sonnambula," for it has not been given here recently. Not that you need fear comparison now," he concluded proudly.

I finished the season to the satisfaction of all concerned. I was paid the largest salary I had yet received, had pleased Florence, and was now quite a daughter of the city, while Pratesi vainly tried to conceal his pride.

A summer engagement in Milan was offered me, but

Pratesi did not consider it good enough, although a year ago it would have been eminently satisfactory. But hardly had I settled down to study in the dear Fiesole villa when I was offered a six weeks' season in the second theater of Naples, to sing *Lucia* and *Amina.* This Pratesi advised me to accept, and after but a fortnight's rest, he accompanied me to Naples. He would not hear of my going alone, having all the Tuscan's contempt for *meridionali,* whom he believed capable even of murder.

We were soon installed in a small hotel, overlooking the beautiful bay, and passed the time not spent in rehearsing in a little sightseeing. After Pratesi left, I formed a kind of friendship with a young Russian girl student, and continued my excursions to Capri, and other charming environs. My fellow artists were all strangers, and outside the theater I saw little of them. But I liked the Neapolitans, and as they liked me, I have only pleasant recollections of my first professional visit to their city. Nor has my love of Naples ever lessened.

CHAPTER VII

FULLY LAUNCHED

My uneventful student days were over. Hardly had I finished my Naples engagement, and returned to Fiesole to be petted and made much of by dear Signora Cecchi, who with her own hands prepared my favorite dishes, while Maria never tired of hearing of my experiences, than a new and advantageous contract was offered me by Fano. This was for the season beginning in September at the Dal Verme Theater, Milan, at that time of the year supreme in musical interest, since La Scala would not open its doors until some months later. I was engaged to sing *Lucia,* and *Elvira* in "I Puritani," a rôle not in my repertoire, so as it was now July, that meant hard work. Every morning Pratesi and I studied the music, and I usually spent all of the afternoon, except for a walk, learning the words, planning the action, trying to sink my identity in that of the character.

Pratesi had no use for those who merely sang through the music of a rôle, and while he differed greatly in his ideas of interpretation from those preached nowadays, and never would consent to a sacrifice of beauty of tone to dramatic effects, he yet insisted upon dramatic action. While many Italian singers may lack the finesse in acting of the French school, of which at that time I knew nothing, yet they make up for this

by an impassioned warmth, sometimes too vehement, but never leaving the public cold.

We worked hard, and as always with Pratesi, I knew every note of my own and most of the tenor's music. It was well, for at one time he would undoubtedly have gone to pieces had it not been for me.

He was very young, with a rarely beautiful voice, and phenomenal high tones. A pupil of a prominent Milanese *Maestro,* it was because of these high tones that "I Puritani" had been chosen for his début. He sang well at rehearsals, but on the opening night had the worst attack of stage fright that I have ever witnessed. His voice was hardly affected, but he forgot whole bars of his music. Fortunately for him, I was on the stage at the time, and by singing them for him, I certainly saved the situation. Then, too, although he was of course supposed to be madly in love with Elvira, it was I who had to do the love-making. I actually had to pursue the poor wretch from one side of the stage to the other. He gave me despairing glances, and the audience snickered. When the curtain fell, there was but faint applause. The poor creature's teacher met us in the wings, and hurled abuse at the cowering little tenor. My sympathies were aroused.

"Nonsense, *Maestro,*" I cried, "we have all had stage fright in our time. He will be all right in the next act." (I was not at all sure of this.)

I gave him such good advice as occurred to me, for I had never so lost control of myself.

"Don't look at your audience," I warned him. "And sing the big aria well. That is what they are waiting for."

I must have helped him, for he was more self-possessed. When he came to his aria, with the famous high C sharp for which the audience had been waiting —woe to him had he omitted or transposed it!—it rang out so clear, true, of such beautiful quality, that the house roared approval. Although when we acknowledged our curtain calls, he seized my hand in a grip that was painful, he was saved. He was quite grateful, and his teacher even more so, but by the third performance of the opera he had grown confident to the point of making suggestions on my acting in the scenes we had together.

While singing in Milan, I was offered and signed a contract for a season in Rome, for more money than I had yet received.

The Roman season was quite a long one. The *Maestro* proved to be the one under whom I had made my debut in Rimini. He greeted me as an old friend, and had much that was complimentary to say about my career.

I availed myself of my leisure to study *Violetta* in "La Traviata" with him, and he taught me some good effects. He was now my firm friend, and his manner to me most agreeable.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in Rome. Every Sunday morning used to find me in one of the churches, listening to fine old masses, beautifully sung. I visited the Vatican galleries, although too ignorant then really to appreciate the wonders that I saw there. A pleasant feature of my stay was that, for the first time in my career, I was thrown with English and Americans.

While trying to find a comfortable place to stay,

one afternoon I discovered a small and attractive hotel in a side street, liked the room shown me, and engaged it. The hotel proved to be patronized chiefly by English, with a few Americans, not tourists of the usual variety, but people who were spending the winter in Rome.

I was on friendly terms with several of the guests before they learned that I was an opera singer, and by that time they apparently liked me well enough to continue friendly. We made little excursions together, visited the Catacombs, the Coliseum by moonlight, and I think the girls thought it quite interesting to know a real opera singer. They made up a party several times to go and hear me sing, and I, for my part, felt quite like a girl again, instead of the experienced artist that I had begun to consider myself.

One incident of the season derives importance from later happenings. A short opera had recently been awarded the prize in one of those competitions with which Italian music publishers keep alive interest in operatic composition. Its author was unknown, Pietro Mascagni.

This opera, of which much was expected by those who had seen the score, was to be given its first production on any stage in Rome, at the close of our season, by a specially engaged company. The young composer came to Rome for the rehearsals, visited the theater a few days before our season closed, and met all of us. He heard my last performance of *Lucia,* and was very complimentary, in an odd, bashful way. He was very young, flashily dressed, wearing a good deal of jewelry, was rather good-looking, though some-

what coarse even then. But he was most amiable, and delighted with having won the prize, although he could have had no idea of how soon, all over the world, audiences were to be familiar with "Cavalleria Rusticana," nor that every hand-organ would soon be playing its *Intermezzo,* every aspiring soprano singing *Santuzza's* aria.

While in Rome, Pratesi had been negotiating a contract for me to sing in Trieste, and finally sent the document for my signature. I was to sing *Linda, Lucia* and *Violetta*—how glad I was that I had studied the rôle—and ordered my costumes in Rome. Two of the girls in the hotel helped me choose them. I was happy as a lark that winter. It was pleasant to be speaking my native tongue again, pleasant to go about with young companions.

News of my Trieste contract circulated among my fellow artists with the speed characteristic of theaters. The *Maestro* gave me a letter of introduction to the Trieste conductor, who was a friend. I rather think my Roman experiences with young friends once more were responsible for what happened.

Trieste is an attractive city, the bay is beautiful. High hills partly surrounding it keep off chilly winds from the north. When I arrived, this bay was rippling blue water, dancing in the sunlight, the land was in all the freshness of early spring verdure, wild flowers were blooming on the hillsides.

I found a nice little hotel, where manager and servants all spoke Italian, which delighted me, since I knew not one word of German. But I soon discovered that Trieste was as Italian as any city in Italy. The theater

was new and attractive, the *Maestro* agreeable, a contralto whom I had sung with before and liked was of the company, and the friendly basso of Rimini days greeted me effusively. Everything looked promising. My first appearance was a success. I was serenaded in my hotel, and unknown admirers sent me flowers.

I had been in Trieste but a short time, when one evening, as I came off the stage, the manager stood in the wings, beside him a smart looking young man, an officer in Austrian uniform. The manager presented him as Lieutenant von Zolter. I was a trifle annoyed. I did not encourage introductions of this kind. I was obliged to go before the curtain to bow, and when I returned, both men had gone. The following morning a handsome bouquet was sent to my room with the officer's card. I could neither return nor acknowledge them, as there was no address.

That afternoon, as I sat in my room reading, his card was brought up. I hesitated, but finally went down to the drawing-room, although ordinarily I would have sent down word that I was engaged.

However, any annoyance vanished after a few minutes of chat, for he took exactly the right tone. He explained that as he had not had an opportunity the evening before, he had ventured to call and tell me how much he enjoyed my singing. He went on to say that he had spent the greater part of his life in or near Vienna, and that it was one of the greatest hardships of his army life now that so seldom could he hear good music in the places where he was stationed.

"I have been to the theater every evening that you

have sung," he assured me. "I shall if possible go every future evening."

Conversation turned on music in general. He had heard much of which I was ignorant, and time passed very quickly. As he was leaving, he asked to come again, pleading the pleasure that it was for him to talk about music with some one who loved it; he offered his services as guide to the various sights of Trieste. I hesitated, but finally agreed to go to Miramar with him.

This was the first time in my stage career that I had ever done such a thing. I do not quite know why I accepted his invitation. He was young, very good looking, with a boyish manner that was one of his greatest charms. He had none of the stiffness, at all events with me, of some of the Austrian and German officers whom I later met. Nor had he the odious familiarity which they too often showed with stage people, whom they were too apt to regard as their lawful prey. He seemed quite like an American to me, and apparently met me on the same social footing that one of my own race might have done. As I considered myself the equal of any foreign man living, with or without a title, and superior to most of the artists with whom I was thrown, this did not surprise me. From what he afterwards told me, I am sure that he was surprised to meet a lady in the person of a prima donna.

My winter in Rome had made me long for society of my own age and breeding, and I found it very pleasant to visit points of interest with one who was always ready with bright comments. The visit to

Miramar was but the first of many little excursions. We walked together, climbed the hills, took coffee at little restaurants or primitive inns; we had long, and to us at least, interesting talks on music, and it was Carl who first aroused my interest in arts other than singing.

In all our intercourse during those weeks there was no hint of sentiment. I think Carl thoroughly enjoyed an association which was quite as novel to him as to me. My American bringing up made me totally different from the Continental girl or woman with the opposite sex. I saw no harm in going about with him, and occasionally dining with him. Any hesitation that I might have felt, since in my young days, nice American girls, especially in the South, did not do such things, was overcome by the thought that as an artist I was entitled to more freedom.

We were not in love, merely good friends. After I left Trieste we exchanged a few letters which the whole world might have read, and I do not even remember who first stopped writing.

I had intended returning at once to Fiesole, but Pratesi suggested that I go for a short vacation to the Lido, promising that he and Maria would join me there.

I remember I thought him looking frail, but he was in good spirits, and seemed to enjoy watching Maria and me as we took our daily dips in the warm Adriatic.

My identity was soon known, and I was still new enough in my career to enjoy being pointed out as a young prima donna. We made few acquaintances.

Pratesi was a strict guardian, and as Maria's engagement to a young Florentine merchant was, so to say, being negotiated, there must be no chance of gossip concerning her.

Back at Fiesole again, I studied, or joined Signora Cecchi and Maria in their shopping expeditions. Maria was married in November, and owing to the flourishing state of my finances, I was able to make her quite a handsome present of silver, which delighted them all, even though Pratesi gently chided me for extravagance.

A few weeks after the wedding, a large envelope arrived one morning for Pratesi. He tore it open, and then I knew from his expression that there was good news. He turned to me and cried excitedly:

"It has come, Luisa, it has come!"

"What?" I asked, with equal excitement.

"Your contract for the San Carlo. At least they agree to my terms, but would be glad if we will meet them in Milan to make final arrangements. Pack your best clothes, for we leave to-morrow."

This was indeed good news. To sing at San Carlo, second to none of Italy's theatres save La Scala! We discussed my rôles. The inevitable *Lucia, Violetta,* the *Queen,* and *Rosina* in "The Barber," were stipulated. That was why Pratesi had suggested my learning the latter rôle. This contract explained some of his mysterious dealings with Fano. They had been maneuvering for this engagement for months. It was Fano who had finally secured it for me. He had closely followed my career from my début.

We went to Milan. Fano congratulated me in his

cool way, warned me of pitfalls to avoid, gave me a brief description of the character of the musical director, and told me how to proceed to overcome the dislike the director was sure to show me at first, since he had wanted the engagement for a friend. He gave me letters of introduction to various journalists and men prominent in theatrical circles, and many instructions.

It was Fano who chose my hotel, quite a different one from the modest inn at which I had stayed in Naples before. I was not to open the season. That honor was given to Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana," which I now heard for the first time. It was followed by another opera, but the leading artists that evening sang in the new work. The dramatic soprano, probably the foremost in Italy, with a luscious voice, was a woman of intensely dramatic temperament, great magnetism, and withal sweet and charming. The tenor was also well known, as was the baritone, so the performance was a fine one, and highly successful.

Although I have heard this opera many times since, it has never lost its charm for me. It is to my mind, the very personification of Italy; of life among the people, such as one may see in any little Italian town. The music is so thoroughly characteristic. Then, too, the first performance alone convinced me that in the three leading singers, I was listening to the greatest artists whom I had yet heard.

I was glad to become acquainted with Starnio, the *Santuzza* of these performances. She was, in addition to being a great artist, very entertaining, and often had a chosen few of us convulsed with her accounts of

incidents which had happened to her during her extensive travels. She had sung in almost every country save my unsuspected native land. The baritone was the oldest of the three, and always listened to attentively. We all teased the good-natured tenor. Quite often, we four and sometimes the *Maestro* met in a certain restaurant noted for its cooking for our meal of the day, at an hour varying from noon to three o'clock of an afternoon, according to the demands of the theatre. Here we would spend several hours at table, and I felt quite the beginner, as I listened to experiences of the others. They called me *"Bébé,"* and were very good to me, giving me excellent friendly advice.

The tenor had a tremendous voice, and when he gave an order other occupants of the room stared. The waiters were always attentive, anticipating the generous tips which they received from all save the tenor. He was decidedly stingy, but laughed good-naturedly when the others accused him of it.

We used to plot to add to his reckoning. Sometimes one of the men would seize the bill before poor Taddeo saw it, and with a wink at the waiter, add a couple of *lire* to the amount. Seldom was this ruse successful. Taddeo would smilingly haggle over a single *soldo*. One day we succeeded in making him wager wine for the entire table, and to our delight, he lost. He made a wry face, and suggested almost the cheapest wine on the list in payment of his wager. This was greeted with derision by the men, however, who insisted upon French champagne. Taddeo gave in with as good grace as possible, and consoled himself by drinking more of it than anyone else.

In accordance with Fano's instructions, a few days after my arrival I waylaid the *Maestro,* and politely asked him if he could find time to coach me on my repertoire, adding that I would be glad of the opportunity to work with so eminent a musician. This was not mere flattery, for he was one of the best known conductors in Italy.

He grunted, surveyed me from beneath shaggy eyebrows, muttered something about being very busy, and when I gently persisted, named an enormous price. I calmly accepted, so reluctantly, he set a time for my first lesson. I chose "The Barber," as I had never sung the rôle of *Rosina.*

He was in a bad temper at the first lesson, and nothing that I did was right. He assured me that the music did not suit my voice, but although furious, I kept my temper. He seemed surprised when I asked when I should come again, but named a time. At the second lesson he was more agreeable, and by the third, was delightful. I thoroughly enjoyed the lessons.

Meanwhile the question of my first appearance came up. *La Traviata* was decided upon. Dear Starnio lent me her own maid to help me dress, and even came herself to my dressing-room to offer suggestions as to my make-up. I had a good tenor for *Alfredo,* and the great baritone consented to sing the Father, to strengthen the cast. I had many recalls, and the following day the papers commented very favorably on my acting, declaring that I showed the spirit of a true *tragédienne.* They also said that it was a pleasure to see a *Violetta* who was slender, young and beautiful.

Dear Starnio occupied a box with a Neapolitan gen-

tleman, one of the stockholders of the theatre, and both applauded me visibly. Afterwards she told me that I had decided dramatic ability, praised my voice, and declared that she thought it would develop into a lyric soprano. Acting on this, I studied *Micaela* and *Marguerite* with the *Maestro*.

The season was a pleasant one. For the first time, I met and associated on terms of artistic equality and real friendliness with some of the great artists of the day. Although some of their ways occasionally jarred on me—always the tenor swallowed his soup noisily; I had never been accustomed to seeing toothpicks freely used at the table; nor did I like to have people shriek across a restaurant at me, as even dear Starnio did—little things of no great importance, yet impossible for me—yet they were kindly, jolly souls. They seemed to have little of the petty jealousy of some of the lesser artists with whom I had hitherto been thrown.

I met some of the leading musicians of Naples and their wives; I met several members of the Neapolitan aristocracy, but no ladies. Gradually I realized that as an artist I did not belong to society; I was of another world. Between me and such persons as I might have associated with had I never gone on the stage, there was a gulf; a gulf which could only be bridged by the extremely unlikely event of a marriage between me and one of these aristocrats. Occasionally, I inferred, such a thing did occur, but very rarely.

At the end of the season we parted with friendly farewells. I went directly to Milan, and to Fano's office, where I signed a contract for the summer season in a big Buenos Aires theatre, at a salary which seemed

fabulous to me then, and over which Fano rubbed his hands as he named it.

"They want you to include *Micaela.* Can you learn it?" he asked.

He was pleased when I told him that I had already studied it, and amused when I told him how friendly the Neapolitan *Maestro* had grown with me.

There was no time to go to Florence. I ordered costumes, and learned to my delight that Starnio was also to be of the company. We traveled to Genoa together, from which port we sailed, and on board the steamer found Taddeo, the big tenor, the baritone, and several of the lesser artists of the San Carlo company, while the conductor Galetti was none other than the *Maestro* under whom I had made my début. He had heard of my successes, and was very friendly.

We had a pleasant voyage. The weather was delightful, the sea very smooth. There were some agreeable South Americans on board, who tried to teach me Spanish and the women were more friendly with us artists than Italian women. They quite sought us out. We sang at two ship concerts, the captain and other officers singled us out for special attentions, while my first sight of the mighty La Plata, up which we steamed for some distance, before disembarking at Buenos Aires, was worth traveling far to see.

CHAPTER VIII

A SEASON IN SOUTH AMERICA

My first season in South America was in several ways eventful. My artistic relations were from the first agreeable. I received more enthusiastic praise from the press than ever before. Ere the season was over came a big opportunity for me, once again through illness. In fact, when this third chance came, I began to consider myself as fated to owe my advancement largely to the misfortunes of others.

Besides Starnio and myself, a third leading soprano had been engaged, a Russian, with a lovely lyric voice, a favorite of several years' standing with the Buenos Aires public. It had been planned to give Gounod's "Faust" with her as *Marguerite,* and rehearsals had begun when she was taken seriously ill with typhoid fever. It was evident that she would not be able to sing again that season.

Faust had been chosen especially for the sake of a French tenor, who thus far had been heard only in "Carmen." *Marguerite* was one of the rôles which Starnio either never had sung, or did not wish to sing.

There was much discussion of what could be done by the directors of the theatre, the conductor, all those connected with the opera season, and of course we artists were all interested. I determined upon a rash

step. Without mentioning my intention to anyone, I went to Galetti's hotel at an hour when I was quite sure to find him in, and sent up my name. He asked me to come up at once, and when I entered his sitting-room, a dark-haired Italian whom I had seen several times in the theatre was there. For a moment I hesitated to explain my errand, but finally decided to come to the point at once, regardless of the presence of a third person. I was afraid that I might not have courage to return were I to leave now, without mentioning the object of my visit.

In a few words I therefore told Galetti that I understood the difficulty in which the management found itself, owing to the illness of the Russian, and had come to propose that I sing the rôle of *Marguerite*. He stared in astonishment, while the other man seemed interested. Then Galetti pooh-poohed the idea.

I was a *coloratura* soprano. I reminded him that I had studied the rôle the preceding winter in Naples, with a *Maestro* whose ability was recognized. He objected that while I might indeed have sung the music, he greatly doubted if I could do myself justice in a performance of the opera. Almost to my own surprise, I found myself expostulating, coaxing. Suddenly the hitherto silent third party remarked:

"Since Signorina Della Rocca is so confident, why not give her the chance? It would save us much annoyance, for you know as well as I do that the alternative, the opera we were speaking of, is sure to be a failure. Let us give 'Faust' by all means, if but for a single performance, since the Signorina is willing to take the risk. That will at least satisfy Durand."

As Galetti deferred surprisingly to this young man, I guessed that he was something of a personage, and learned that he was the representative of one of the big Italian music houses, and that the French tenor was being pushed by this house for one of the mysterious reasons—mysterious, that is, to the uninitiated —which often explain theatrical or operatic careers.

Galetti still hesitated. I believe it was partly true that, as he afterwards assured me, he was thinking of my own interest. Were I to fail in the new rôle, it would certainly injure me for the rest of the season, even in spite of my real successes hitherto. But as I still persisted, and the unknown supported me, Galetti finally shrugged his shoulders resignedly, and remarked that he would mention my proposition to the management, and notify me the following day of their decision.

I went home rather frightened, and spent most of the remainder of the day going over the music of the rôle. I felt fairly reassured. I believed that I could sing it, and it was well that I had such confidence, for I was notified that evening to come to the theatre the following morning for rehearsal.

Durand, the tenor, was evidently worried, although very polite. We had sung together in "Carmen," of course, but that was very different from "Faust," since *Don Jose's* biggest scenes are all with *Carmen.* The Garden Scene went smoothly, and I thought that our voices blended well in the love duet. He evidently thought so, too, for he murmured a compliment or two. Bordoni, the baritone whom I had liked so well in Naples, was the *Valentine;* the basso was a fine artist,

a Pole, with whom afterwards I sang in many theatres. At this time, he was quite young.

How I blessed Pratesi, and the habits of careful study that, thanks to him, I had acquired. The others were all familiar with their rôles, had sung them many times indeed, so we had fewer rehearsals in consequence. New costumes had to be hastily made for me by a Buenos Aires costumer, but for once these were of little concern to me. I knew that I had undertaken something of moment to my whole career. If I failed there would be a grand chorus of: "I told you so," from everyone connected with the theatre. Nothing but a real success would avail me.

It was here that dear Starnio helped me wonderfully. From the first, she insisted that the music was well suited to me; she came to rehearsals, and afterwards when we were alone, made criticisms and suggestions which were most valuable. Durand, too, in the nicest way, told me of little bits of business used in Paris.

At last the night arrived. Never, not even at my début, had I been so nervous. When the curtain at the back of *Faust's* study was raised, disclosing the vision of *Marguerite* at her spinning wheel, I trembled so that I could hardly keep my foot on the treadle, and turn the wheel. When the curtain fell again, I hurried to my dressing-room, appalled at the state of my nerves. I did my best to pull myself together, summoning all my will power. When my entry came, at least I no longer shook, and although I had not complete control of my voice, the audience did not realize, from *Marguerite's* few phrases, how nervous I was,

and at least one critic next day alluded to the charmingly girlish timidity of my entrance.

Of course the first test came in the Garden Scene.

I was too restless to remain in my dressing-room, so wrapping a scarf around me, I stood in the wings as *Siebel* began the familiar Flower Song. The management, wishing, I strongly suspected, to strengthen the cast as much as possible, had assigned this rather insignificant rôle to the leading contralto of the company. A Venetian, she had one of the richest, most dramatic voices that I have ever heard, and was handsome, too, in a dark, tragic style, quite different from the usual Venetian type. Of fiery temperament, she had one grave defect, uncertain intonation. Had it not been for this, she would have been in the very first rank of artists, and even as it was, she had many admirers. She had been the *Carmen* when I sang *Micaela.*

She was singing the first bars of her aria when I stepped into the wings. Her voice flowed out in a stream of pure beauty. Never have I heard the somewhat banal aria sung better. She was looking strikingly handsome and boyish in a rich costume, and fully deserved the salvo of applause which greeted her as she finished. She bowed her thanks repeatedly, and finally the *Maestro* raised his baton, and she repeated the second part of the aria. When she came into the wings to wait her next entrance, she was radiant. She gave me an affable: *"Buona sera,"* but I fancied that there was condescension in her tone.

This was a spur to my pride. Did she really fancy that she was to carry off all the honors as a prima

donna? I was no longer nervous. The *King of Thule* went well, my voice was perfectly steady, and when I came to the *Jewel Song,* I threw myself into it with an abandon which I had not felt before. I coquetted with my mirrored reflection, and began to be happy. I knew that my trill was good, and prolonged it recklessly, and when I reached the last sustained high note I held it long, and realized that I had won my audience.

There were roars of applause, and I was obliged to taken an encore. The *Maestro* hesitated to give the signal—I believe he really was thinking only of sparing me—but by that time I was reckless, and nodded as he raised his eyebrows inquiringly.

The rest of the act went very well, and when I sank into the arms of the tenor at the open window, as the curtain fell, he murmured his kindly congratulations in my ear at the moment when, to the audience, we appeared oblivious of everyone but each other.

Everyone in the company congratulated me. Galetti was as beaming as if he had first suggested that I sing the rôle. The dark young man whose name I still did not know, was quite effusive, and remarked that as an Italian he was proud of me.

But I was not so elated that I did not realize that the worst lay yet before me. Upon my ability to last for the final trio would depend my real success, at least in my own eyes. If I were too tired to sing the difficult finale well, while the audience might easily forgive it, I should know that I had overestimated my forces. Accordingly I saved myself in the *Church Scene,* de-

pending upon my dramatic shudders and shrinking from the Devil to carry my part.

The following scene with the death of *Valentine* went splendidly. Then came the finale. The excitement or my previous careful singing had its effect. I sang as I had never sung the trio before, and when I sank down "dead" on my straw pallet, I was glad of the few minutes of complete relaxation, glad to close my eyes, and shut out the large audience, the lights, everything. It was but a moment, and then we were all called before the curtain many times, to bow our thanks. I had another big success to set down.

Starnio, who had been in the theatre, came with the others to congratulate me, but the next day she gave me some excellent advice.

"Last night showed that your voice is suited to such rôles," she generously told me. "But bear in mind that you are young, your voice is young. Don't force it. Don't give up *Lucia, Violetta, Amina* too soon. Don't let people persuade you that you are a dramatic soprano"—she paused significantly, and added: "yet!"

I sang *Marguerite* five times that season, together with *Lucia, Violetta* and *Micaela.* I had some fine notices, I was praised by friends, but there were not wanting hints and warnings that it would be best for me to confine myself to the lighter rôles in which my successes had been won, and almost the first words that Fano said to me upon my return to Italy, were a lecture on my foolishness.

Another event in my South American season must, I suppose, be styled my first love affair, although Heaven knows there was no love on my side. A wealthy banker

of Buenos Aires, a widower, with two half-grown daughters, fell in love with me, and begged me, not once, but several times, to marry him. He was a short, stout individual, with a commonplace face, and rather prominent brown eyes, but he displayed an ardor, even a poetry in his love-making which amazed me, although it did not touch my heart. He offered me beautiful presents of jewelry which I declined, or sent back to him, but I could not refuse the flowers with which he kept my rooms filled, and I sometimes accepted boxes for the theatres, and even suppers, provided another woman were of the party.

Even had he been far more prepossessing, I think his wooing would have left me equally cold. I was too absorbed in my career to think of marriage then. His was the last face, looking quite woe-begone, that I saw on the dock when we sailed away.

Just before sailing, I had sad news from Pratesi, nothing less than the death of dear Signora Cecchi. He wrote me that he had persuaded Maria and her husband to occupy the villa with him. I was glad that he could continue living there. I should have hated to think of him anywhere but in the pretty villa, with his music, his artistic souvenirs about him, within easy access to his old friends in Florence.

I went directly to Milan as soon as my steamer arrived in Genoa, and had a long discussion as to my future affairs with Fano. He now treated me quite as a full-fledged artist, and talked of his plans for me. He had several offers, but what he advised, and of course I accepted, fully appreciating his advice, was a six weeks' contract beginning in November, with the

Royal Opera in Madrid, and late in January a contract for—I can still remember the dramatic pause he made in telling me of this, before adding: "La Scala." I can also remember that I gave a shriek of delight. I to sing in La Scala! Nor was my joy lessened when he calmly added: "Yes, but *Micaela.*" I believe I would have consented to sing *Martha* in "Faust" for the sake of appearing in Italy's famous theatre. However, it was not so bad. After trying to dampen my enthusiasm, which was characteristic of Fano, he added: "And possibly *Marguerite* in 'The Damnation of Faust.' I am trying to arrange it for you. It rests with the director, and whether or not you please him."

He went on to explain that for the latter half of the La Scala season, a famous French baritone had been engaged. He would sing *Escamillo* in "Carmen," for the title rôle of which an equally famous artist, with whose name I had long been familiar, had been engaged. The baritone would also sing *Mephistopheles* in Berlioz's "Damnation of Faust," a work of which I then heard for the first time.

Fano did not seem surprised at my ignorance, of which I was ashamed. I fancy that the day was long past when such ignorance on the part of singers could surprise him. He patiently explained that the baritone had by far the longest rôle, that of the soprano being comparatively unimportant, and that the music was well within my capabilities. There was another soprano talked of for the rôle, a more experienced artist, although Fano was kind enough to say not so good a singer as I. The director, however, had flatly refused

to engage me before hearing me sing the most important number for soprano, the *King of Thule* aria. Could I learn it and sing it a week hence? I said that I could. Fano looked amused; after some search, he produced a score, and lent it to me. "There is no use for you to buy one until you see how matters turn out," he remarked, thrifty Italian that he was.

A week later I signed the contract.

I wonder how those who think that the life of an opera singer is one round of triumphs and festivities would have enjoyed my next weeks in Milan. Hours of daily work on my new rôle; visits to costumer, dressmaker and milliner, the photographer, or brisk walks to keep in good condition. I had no friends in the city. Fano was not one in the social sense, and besides a very busy man. Sometimes artists with whom I had sung, passed through, and if we met there were effusive greetings, possibly a meal together in a restaurant. Occasional visits to the theatre, or opera—La Scala was not opened until after I left for Spain—but for the most part, my evenings were spent alone in my hotel room, reading, and rarely finding in the papers a paragraph about my native land, which now seemed so distant.

My Spanish season was not eventful. I had good success, although I was not the chief prima donna. She was a dramatic soprano who Fano had told me was very popular in Spain, where she had sung much. Still, in my own line I was first. The contralto, a stranger both personally and by reputation to me, introduced herself to me at our first rehearsal, and hastened, after learning that this was my first visit to

Spain, to assure me that Spanish audiences were very hard to please. I coldly replied that I had hitherto found no difficulty in pleasing my public, and in any case, I should be in Madrid for but a few weeks, as I had a contract with La Scala. This amazed her, and after that she took pains to be agreeable.

I was honored by being summoned to sing at the royal palace, and received a very handsome bracelet from the Queen, my first gift from royalty, therefore highly prized. I was, however, less concerned about my success than ever before, since I was now sufficiently Italian to feel that the one really important event for me was to be a success at La Scala. That might mean not only a more important contract with La Scala itself, but would also establish me far more firmly as an artist in both Italy and South America.

My La Scala début was made in the "Damnation of Faust," which was a piece of luck. Oh, the joy of singing in Italy's greatest opera house, where the acoustics were perfect, the orchestra composed of real musicians as distinguished from mere performers. I had never before seen such magnificent stage settings, such admirable lighting effects. The conductor was a magician. Under his baton the men played as if inspired, and the artists felt the same magnetic influence, and gave of their best. A nod of satisfaction from him repaid us for hours of hard work.

The famous French baritone was indeed a great artist. I have never sung with a greater, and for once naught but admiration of his interpretation and singing was heard from the leading down to the humblest

members of the company. Nor must it be supposed that the former are always the severest critics.

When we came to the scene in which *Mephistopheles* prevents *Marguerite,* not by physical strength, but by his will, from entering the church to pray, his marvelous acting almost hypnotized me there on the bare unset stage, at rehearsal, with none of the accessories of a performance. Needless to say, when the night of the first performance arrived, the effect was amazing. He swept the entire audience off its feet, he carried it breathlessly along with him.

Perhaps it will convey some idea of the man's genius, when I say that I spent most of the time when not on the stage, in the wings, watching his every movement. I hardly even thought of his singing, although his was one of the voices of the century, even if not quite so beautiful as Bordoni's, for his interpretation, gestures and make-up fascinated me. I was so absorbed that I even forgot the probability that at least some of the applause after the Church Scene was for me, and it was not until he himself came to me, and offered his hand to lead me before the curtain, that I roused myself from the spell he had cast. He noticed my absorbed state, I feel sure, and was probably both amused and flattered. At all events, he was very pleasant and friendly, both then and afterwards.

I had good success. Naturally, the newspapers concerned themselves chiefly with the great foreigner, and the work itself, but *Marguerite* came in for due attention. I was mentioned as a newcomer whom it was hoped to hear frequently in the future. Part of all

this was due to Fano. He knew all the journalists and musicians in Milan, and I did not ask what wires he pulled, how or when. I knew that my affairs were safe in his hands.

Pratesi had expected to come to Milan for my début, but to his grief and my deep regret, was unable to do so. An illness of which he made light, but which worried me, kept him in Fiesole, and he only recovered in time to come on for my last performance, when I sang *Micaela.*

My season at La Scala was, I find upon consulting my diary, remarkable for another event. Leoncavallo's beautiful little opera, "I Pagliacci," was given its first performance. I fell in love with it at first hearing, and went to every performance. The rôles were all well sung, and whether or not he was spurred to greater attainment than ever before by the great French artist, certainly the Italian baritone whom I had heard several times without great interest, surpassed himself in the Prologue. It was not until several years later that I heard that number sung in a superlative manner by Sammarco, the famous Italian baritone, who ever after that remained the *Tonio, par excellence* for me.

The French artist was deeply interested in Leoncavallo's opera. I heard later that he was influential in having the work sung in France, and became a noted *Tonio,* but I never heard him sing the rôle.

There is always much excitement about the first production of an opera. All the artists then in Milan were deeply interested. We attended rehearsals whenever our own engagements permitted, discussed the music, and were either outspoken admirers or hostile

critics. We liked the young composer, and exchanged stories, some of them true, some the most barefaced fabrications, which we had heard about him and his life.

It was at one of these rehearsals that I met the dark young man whom I had seen in South America the preceding year. He came up to me in the darkened theatre, and presented the elderly man who accompanied him, his father. The latter scrutinized me closely from beneath heavy brows as his son chatted. When his son paused for a moment, the father remarked:

"I heard you sing the other evening. A good voice, promising. Fano manages your affairs, does he not? Yes? Good. Some day we may have something for you."

He bowed, shook hands limply, and went to another part of the house, where he was soon surrounded. My companion, one of the lesser singers of the company, asked in an awestruck tone:

"Do you know Ricardo?" rather superfluously, it would seem. She added: "He is one of the most influential men in Italy. They say that a singer is made if once he takes him or her up."

It was not, however, for some months that I had any relations with father or son.

I had a few weeks of rest between my season at La Scala and the date when I must sail from Genoa for South America, and these I spent with Pratesi, in the dear Fiesole villa. I had long talks with him, not only about my career, in which he was, as ever, deeply interested, but he was more than ever inclined to dwell in the past, and indulged in many reminis-

cences. He seemed to me visibly feebler, and for the first time he looked his age.

My second South American season did not greatly differ from my first. The "Damnation of Faust" was not a popular success, and was given but three times, although much praise was bestowed upon the artists. On the other hand, "Carmen," with the Frenchman, and for protagonist the Venetian contralto of the year before, and with me again in the rôle of *Micaela,* was such a success that it was sung more often than originally planned. The French baritone, however, did not like the Venetian, and commented rather too freely to some of us on her defects, while doing scant justice to her merits. Of course she heard of this, and as he was very friendly to me, there grew up a coolness between her and myself for which I really was not to blame.

"Don Giovanni" was a success largely because of the strikingly handsome protagonist, although I came in for my share of applause as *Zerlina,* a rôle of which I was fond. So great indeed was the baritone's popularity that the management decided to put on *Otello* for his benefit. It was hurriedly studied, and I believe through his influence, the rôle of *Desdemona* was assigned to me, which did not make me any more popular with the women members of the company.

As I landed in Genoa on my return from South America, to my surprise, a telegram was handed me. It was from Fano, bidding me call on the music publisher Ricardo at a certain hotel in Genoa, immediately.

Ricardo was in the hotel corridor as I entered, about to lunch, as he told me, and invited me to join him.

We chatted about various matters, he asked about the Buenos Aires season, then:

"I suppose you know, *Signorina,*" he began in a leisurely manner, "that next month Genoa proposes to hold a festival in commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of your country?"

Actually it was so long since anyone had spoken of me as an American that for a moment I hardly realized that I was one.

"Franchetti, one of our talented young composers, was commissioned more than a year ago to write an opera to be sung here at this time, and which should center around Columbus. Did you know that?"

I shook my head.

"Ah, well, we publishers are more interested in such matters than you singers," he remarked. "You are chiefly interested in composers after they have written a part that suits you, or helped you to score a success, is it not so?" He laughed. "However, the opera is written, it is entitled 'Cristoforo Colombo,' and will be given its first production in this city in about a month. The leading rôle is of course for baritone. One could not imagine Columbus a tenor. But there is a rôle that I believe would suit you well; that of the *Queen Isabella.* Fano tells me that you are a quick study, nor is the rôle a long one. The work will be given in the Carlo Fenice, people will come from all over Italy to hear it, and it is bound to attract much attention. What do you say? Will you undertake it?"

I was both surprised and delighted. To create a rôle, to be offered it by a man of Ricardo's importance in the music world meant that I had indeed ar-

rived. I asked no questions, but promptly declared that I would be glad to sing it.

"Rehearsals begin next week. Will you be ready?"

Again I said yes.

"Very good. A contract will be sent you in a day or two. You may consider it settled."

We chatted for a time, then, as I rose to leave, Ricardo asked amusedly:

"Does not the fee interest you in the slightest?"

I laughed merrily. I had entirely forgotten it.

He laughed, too, and mentioned the amount per performance. It was fair. He then bade me goodbye, and I stopped at the nearest telegraph office to send a message to Pratesi, telling of my good fortune, and another to Fano. The following day, in response to a message from him, I went to Milan.

Fano told me that he wished to discuss his future plans for me, and congratulated me on the Genoa contract, informing me that it had come directly from Ricardo.

"You are lucky, do you know it?" he demanded. "I wonder if you realize that you have gotten on wonderfully well for a foreigner? Not but that you pass for an Italian now."

He had long since told me that Pratesi's carefully prepared story of my origin had never for a moment deceived him.

I replied that it would have been strange if I had not gotten on well, since he had interested himself so much in my behalf. He smiled rather cynically, but was none the less pleased. Then he turned to my future plans.

He informed me that he had arranged with a German impresario for a number of appearances in Berlin, Buda Pesth and Vienna, at good terms, and since I should be a visiting artist, or *"gast,"* I could sing in Italian. I should indeed have been in difficulties had German been required at that period of my career. Later, I became known as the polyglot prima donna, from the number of languages in which I sang.

At the conclusion of this tour, I was wanted again in Madrid, then for twelve performances in Lisbon, my first visit to Portugal. I agreed to his plans, signed contracts, visited the costumer, and then returned to Genoa.

Isabella really figures but little in the opera of "Cristoforo Colombo." There is a rôle for dramatic soprano as well, but to use a modern slang expression, the baritone is the "whole show." However, my music showed off my high notes, and I believed that I could make it telling. There is an effective bit sung off stage, and a long duet with the baritone.

At the first rehearsal in the big theatre, lighted only on the stage, I looked eagerly at each member of the company, in search of a familiar face. The musical director was a well-known Genoese, but a stranger to me, and this was true of all the others, save that when almost every one had assembled, young Ricardo suddenly entered, and came directly towards me with smile and outstretched hand. The others stared, and craned their necks to watch our meeting. Behind him was a bulky figure in whom, to my satisfaction, I recognized a basso who had been with me in Spain the year before. He greeted me effusively, having seen

the cordiality of young Ricardo. The latter then joined the musical director, and was soon absorbed in low-toned conversation with him, and both men glanced at me several times. Still we waited. Finally I asked the basso for whom we were waiting.

"Oh, for Zanelli, of course. He is always late."

Zanelli was the *Colombo* of the opera, and I had never seen him. A few minutes later, a good-looking man in the early thirties, very well dressed, and wearing a huge diamond ring and scarfpin, strolled leisurely on the stage, greeted the director and a couple of the singers, twirled his moustache, and eyed the rest of us. Suddenly he spied young Ricardo. Quickly he crossed the stage, and greeted him effusively.

Ricardo Junior returned his greeting rather condescendingly, and in a few minutes, to my surprise, brought Zanelli over to where I was sitting, and presented him, adding:

"As this lady is to be of the greatest assistance to you, Zanelli, in fact since your whole future rests in her hands, you should make her acquaintance at once."

"Assistance?" murmured Zanelli, evidently not knowing what to make of this speech, half inclined to be annoyed. "How so?"

"*Ma,* where would you be, Colombo, without Queen Isabella?" replied Ricardo, with a cynical smile.

Zanelli laughed, showing fine teeth, and acknowledged the introduction with much effusion. In a few minutes the rehearsal began.

Zanelli was one of the most conceited artists whom I have ever known. He had a beautiful voice, although his singing, to a critical listener, left much to be desired.

He had an unusual range, and his audiences were apt to forget to criticize when he hurled out a ringing high tone, and held it long. He was not a really good actor —I had grown more discriminating since knowing the Frenchman—but he was graceful, wore beautiful costumes, so that with his good looks and warm, rich voice, he charmed his audiences, in spite of the melodramatic exaggerations in which he delighted.

He was a great lady's man, and inclined to boast of his conquests, but a kindly soul, and generous to a fault. Hence he was popular, save with those who found him in their way. He was always polite to me. I believe he considered me a protégée of the two Ricardos, father and son. Indeed, I was treated with great consideration by everyone, and two or three of the lesser singers decidedly flattered me, and hung about me in the theatre. After a few days, Zanelli was inclined to engage me in a flirtation, but not meeting with much encouragement, he finally gave it up, after assuring me that I had a heart of stone, and devoted himself to the extremely pretty young wife of the tenor, to the latter's dismay. The lady herself was quite willing to flirt with Zanelli, and the poor tenor was continually gazing out into the dark theatre at rehearsals, when he was on the stage, trying to find them, or if not busy, scurrying about the theatre with the same object.

The other soprano was a routine singer rather than an artist; a big, coarse, good-natured woman, who called everyone in the theatre but myself by his or her first name. She took a delight in teasing the tenor about his wife's infatuation, sending him off on vain quests, and then shrieking with laughter as she

regaled the others with accounts of what she had done.

The composer arrived soon after rehearsals began, and we were all presented to him. Although in the early thirties, he already had two successful operas to his credit. One of the company had sung in his first success, *Asrael,* and declared that it was far more beautiful than the work we were rehearsing. Still it can have been no easy task to write an opera to order on the life of Christopher Columbus. There was some beautiful music in the work, and my part suited my voice as if it had been written for it.

The work was a great success. The theatre was filled for every performance. An air of excitement was prevalent all over the city. Genoa was in gala attire for the anniversary celebration; there were flags and decorations, bands playing, the hotels were crowded, and I think we all enjoyed ourselves.

I had time to do some sightseeing. I now made a point of visiting museums and art galleries, for my artistic appreciation had developed, especially since my visits to the wonderful Prado in Madrid. But what I liked best in Genoa, aside from the beautiful views out over the bay from the surrounding hills, or the hills themselves, with their ever-changing lights and shadows, were the old marble palaces.

These seemed to lend themselves to all kinds of romantic stories. One could easily imagine thrilling events as occurring, or as having occurred within those thick walls, or in the gardens of which one caught an occasional glimpse through an open doorway. I loved, too, wandering through the labyrinth of narrow lanes in the old, low-lying portion of the city, a kind

of ravine into which one stepped as into another world, from the modern street upon which my hotel was situated. Often I nearly lost myself in this network of narrow streets and alleys, where people of all classes jostled one another, for some of the best shops in Genoa were to be found here. I bought some of the filagree silver for which the city is noted, and a string of amber beads which the shopkeeper, recognizing me, urged upon me, declaring that they insured the wearer against any kind of throat trouble.

A few days before the last performance of "Cristoforo Colombo," all the principal members of the company were bidden to a banquet presided over by Franchetti. Ricardo senior came on from Milan for this, there were toasts drunk, complimentary speeches, etc. He complimented me on my success, declaring that he had expected nothing less. Zanelli, who sat near us, begged the *cavaliere* to tell him if it were true that I had a stone in place of a heart, and we were quite merry together. Franchetti presented several of us with his autographed photograph. Mine was inscribed: "*Alla simpatica Regina Isabella mia, alla bella donna e magnifica cantatrice,* Luisa Della Rocca, *omaggio dal,*" then his name, with a grand flourish. (To my charming Queen Isabella, to the beautiful woman and magnificent singer, Luisa Della Rocca, homage from——)

I had been compelled by contracts already signed to decline a very good offer to sing my rôle of the *Queen* in two other cities in which the opera was to be sung after the Genoa season. Accordingly I left for Milan the day after the last performance. I had little more than a week in which to make my prepara-

tions before setting out for Berlin, and among other things, I had now so large a sum of money deposited in a Milan bank that it was necessary to find some investments for at least a portion. A friend, one of the officers of the bank, attended to this for me, and a day before I left for Berlin, I received the first certificates of stock which I had ever handled. I still hold these, my first investment. They have always paid dividends.

Had I known, could I have guessed what my first German and Austrian season was to bring me, I fancy that I might have refused to sign the contract, even at the risk of remaining for some time idle. Of course I did not know, and now that it is all a bit of long past history, perhaps it was well. If all experience is valuable, I am a greater artist for what that winter brought me. Probably my experience helped me to sound the note of passion in my various interpretations, made me more the dramatic singer.

CHAPTER IX

TOURING THE CONTINENT

I MADE the journey from Milan to Berlin without breaking it. I was met by a man connected with the theatre, escorted to my hotel, and he called the following morning to accompany me to the rehearsal at the theatre.

Here I was greeted by the *Intendant* in French, and he presented the conductor, and several members of the company. The tenor was an Italian who had lived, he told me, for ten years in Germany, and who spoke German fluently. As I was to sing in Italian, he would sing in the same language during our scenes together.

Everyone was polite, and the rehearsal, limited that morning to the portions of "Lucia" in which I figured, began. The duet went well, the sextette less so. Everyone evidently knew the music, and suddenly I realized that the others were singing with none of the variations in rhythm to which I was accustomed. The conductor then politely stopped us, and assuring me that he understood that in Italy we had different ideas, begged me to sing the concerted numbers in strict time, adding that I might take more liberty with my solos. He handed me a score, and since, thanks to Pratesi, not even a German could keep better time than I, the number went more to his satisfaction.

After the rehearsal, I asked the tenor:

"Do you sing everything in this manner? How will it be in the Mad Scene?"

He laughed.

"You will get used to their ways. I came here after two years of singing in Italy, and I remember the difficulties I had with my first opera. It was worse because the work was a German one, they had their own traditions, and I had sung it a number of times in Italian. However, Gaertner will give us what he will consider unreasonable liberty in the duet, and you still more in your big scene. Do not worry, for be sure that he will do everything in his power for a smooth performance."

I strolled back to the hotel somewhat reassured. My approaching début, billed on kiosks as *Fräulein Luisa Della Rocca, aus dem Theater La Scala, von Mailand,* looked very odd.

The orchestral rehearsal next day went very well. Everyone knew his or her part, and sang with military precision. Their purity of intonation was less noticeable. When I came to the Mad Scene, I fancied that the conductor looked pained, even while he resolutely held his men in check to allow my holds and ritards. I felt sure that he disapproved of these, but he said nothing, and shook hands pleasantly at the close of the rehearsal. Several members of the company tried to talk with me, but as I knew no German, were obliged to give up. Gaertner spoke French fluently, and a little Italian.

I was not especially nervous on the evening of my début. The stage settings and lighting were excellent; better than those of any theatre in which I had previ-

ously sung, save La Scala. The artists, even the lesser ones, were carefully made up, their costumes correct as to period, and they showed good stage routine, but again their movements reminded me of well-drilled soldiers.

When I made my first entrance, I was amazed to see that the house was full. No one moved down the aisles, there was no noisy slamming down of seats. Another odd thing. We finished the duet to absolute silence. I must have looked blank, for as soon as he could, the tenor whispered:

"Don't expect applause until the end of the act."

To one accustomed to the bursts of applause with which Italian audiences interrupt a performance, it may be imagined how this apparent coldness had startled me. But at the end of the act, there was applause enough, and Gaertner congratulated me as I passed him on my way to my dressing-room. The sextette was not repeated; something which in Italy would almost have meant a fiasco. I was a bit nervous about the Mad Scene, but sang it as I was accustomed, and Gaertner followed me. When the curtain fell upon my final ravings, there was not a sound from the audience. I was terrified. What was the matter? The orchestra played the final notes, and then came applause which made my heart leap. I was recalled seven times. When the tenor came later to congratulate me, I told him how alarmed I had been.

"I understand perfectly," he assured me. "I went through the same thing. I remember that the first time I sang *Trovatore* I was much upset that I must

not come out of my prison to bow to the audience. In Germany audiences never interrupt the music to applaud, but you need have no doubt of your success," he kindly assured me. "It was unquestioned."

The next day the newspapers were unanimous in praise of my *coloratura.* It was *"wunderbar,"* and *"merkwurdig."* The ease with which I executed difficult passages was compared to the trilling of birds, larks, canaries and nightingales. My Italian passion and fire were also commented upon; one suggested that they were possibly too pronounced, since *Lucia* was a Scotchwoman. There was also mention of my excessive holding of high notes, although when these tones were so beautiful, there was some excuse, etc.

My appearances as *Rosina* and *Violetta* were also most successful. *Lucia* proved the favorite rôle, and I sang it four times. The Berlin agent through whom Fano had arranged my tour was well satisfied, and assured me that he could easily arrange other appearances, had I the time.

The early hour at which operas began was another novelty to me, as was the long intermission during which everyone rushed to the theatre restaurant for beer and sandwiches. During my stay in Berlin, I attended a number of performances at the Opera House. I heard "Tristan und Isolde" for the first time. The *Tristan* was a fat, elderly tenor, whose voice, in its then condition would not have been tolerated in Italy. But the *Isolde!* When first she appeared on the deck of the ship, I saw merely a fat, almost unwieldy figure, and a face which even remarkably skill-

ful make-up could not make handsome. But when she began to sing I forgot everything. Such majesty, sweep and passion! Such a voice! When she came to the final climax of the wonderful *Liebestod* I was trembling with excitement, and as the flood of song poured from her lips, tears rolled unheeded down my cheeks. Others around me were equally moved. One elderly German woman sobbed aloud, and her companion blew his nose violently.

A few days later, I met the artist in the theatre, and she said some charming things in good Italian to me about my singing. I could hardly find words to tell her of the effect her noble performance had made upon me.

Social diversion I had none in Berlin. I sat for some photographs, and managed to keep busy with rehearsals, performances, and some sightseeing. From Berlin I went to Vienna.

I liked Vienna. I liked the theatre, and the artists with whom I was to sing. As many of them spoke French, I felt less a stranger. I was to make my début in "La Traviata," and was glad, since the famous aria of the first act, if well sung, can always be counted on to win an audience. The orchestral rehearsal went well. The tenor was a Roumanian, with a charming voice, who apparently spoke all known languages. He had sung in Italy, and soon we were chatting of common acquaintances. The conductor was an excellent musician, a dignified and charming man.

When I entered my dressing-room on the night of my début, I found a beautiful bouquet, to which a note was attached. It was from "Captain von Zolter"

—so he had been promoted—welcomed me to his native city, and assured me that he and a large party of friends would be in the theater to applaud me that evening. I was pleased to be thus remembered.

The opera went well. I had no cause for complaint of the applause. The theater was filled with a more brilliant audience than those of Berlin. There were beautifully dressed women, wearing magnificent jewels, while the usual contingent of officers in gorgeous uniforms added to the gay effect.

After the last act, among those who came to my dressing-room to congratulate me was Carl. We had opportunity for little more than a handshake, but he asked where I was stopping, and told me that he should call the following afternoon.

"You will want someone to translate all the nice things said about you, I know, unless you have learned German since last we met," he laughed.

He came as he had said, armed with a bundle of newspapers, and greeted me gaily.

"Do you know that you are famous?" he cried. "Everyone is talking, not only of your voice, but of your charm. Listen," and he translated several very favorable criticisms. Then he threw the papers aside. "Enough of them. Tell me about yourself. How does it seem to be famous?"

"Is it possible that you ever doubted that I would be?" I laughed.

He eyed me with evident approval. I knew that I was looking well for I had made a careful toilet, my frock was new and becoming. We chatted quite as though three years had not passed since our last meet-

ing, but I noticed a change in him. He was older, had decidedly matured, yet that hardly explained it. I must have stared at him more fixedly than I realized, for suddenly he paused in his gay conversation, and asked:

"Well, what is it?"

I made some excuse, and was careful to refrain from too close an examination after that.

He told me that he was now stationed in Vienna, asked me how long I should be in the city, and declared that we would have some good times together.

"You will see how gay we are here. Quite different from *bourgeois* Berlin," he assured me, and my spirits rose. I forgot the artist for the moment, and became the mere girl, excited over the prospect of amusing herself.

I did have a good time. I was engaged for seven performances, but as these were scattered over a month, and my rôles were all familiar, I had plenty of leisure. We drove in the beautiful *Ringstrasse,* stopping at various restaurants or confectioners for delicious Viennese coffee and dainty cakes; we visited the art galleries, and I was proud to know that I was no longer ignorant of paintings, but could converse intelligently, and even occasionally offer a criticism which Carl seemed to find worth listening to. Through him I was also able to see several fine private collections, not open to the general public. Several times, too, we went to hear one of the lively Viennese operettas, for although I could not understand a word of the book, the music charmed me, with its verve and swing. After these we would go for supper to some fashionable resort,

always filled with a gay, well-dressed crowd. Carl was kept busy bowing to men and women who apparently belonged to the higher circles of society. I came in for a share of attention, too, sometimes being stared at in a manner which I found annoying. Once or twice, when the day was bright and not too cold, we made excursions out into the beautiful surrounding country, lunching at some little inn.

But charming and friendly as Carl always was, the more I saw of him the more I realized that he was different. He was just as merry as formerly; he spent money more freely, and if I ventured to remonstrate, or tried to insist upon paying my share of these excursions, he put me off very decidedly, asking if I had forgotten that he had been promoted in the army, and consequently had more pay.

Then, although I knew from his allusions, that his father, mother, and at least one sister were living in Vienna, he never suggested my meeting them, and in spite of my knowledge that artists had no social position in Italy, this rather surprised me. I felt that he must realize that I was by birth and bringing-up a lady, accustomed in my own country to associate with ladies and gentlemen, hence quite fitted to associate with them in Europe. I did not then know that there is no country in Europe where lines are more strictly drawn than in Austria.

In Italy, I had been thrown exclusively with artists, save for a few men of the aristocracy, whom I had met casually, and since it had been quite evident to me from the first what any intercourse with them would mean, what they would expect from the least encour-

agement, I had kept them at a distance. But with Carl it had from the beginning been different, or so I had flattered myself. He had never given me a reason to think that he misunderstood what I thought myself justified in calling our friendship. I do not know that I actually expected his mother and sister to call upon me; yet I was rather unreasonably annoyed that he never seemed to think of it.

Gradually I began to realize in what, in part, the change consisted. He had lost much of his former boyishness, save on rare occasions, when he seemed again my Trieste friend. There was a worldly sophistication which I did not remember noticing then. Occasionally he made remarks which vaguely troubled me. Sometimes he eyed me oddly, or watched me apparently to see how I would take certain cynical speeches.

Nevertheless I enjoyed his society. Several times when we were together, some friend of his, usually an officer, would join us on some pretext, and linger until Carl was obliged to present him. Some of these men then sent me flowers, one or two called, quite without invitation, but as I was out a great deal, it chanced that I was out when they called. One, I remember, after the briefest of chats in an art gallery, invited me to supper, which invitation I of course declined. Carl was quite furious when I told him, yet did not seem surprised. For my part, had the invitation come from a complete stranger I should have been less annoyed. It seemed to me that one of Carl's friends, one whom he had himself presented, should have known better.

Another incident which occurred a few days before my departure, led to a serious quarrel.

I was in a touchy mood then. The Christmas holidays were come. Carl had spoken regretfully of family ties, dinners, balls, which would occupy his time. Christmas Day was one of the loneliest that I had ever spent. To pass the time, I went for high mass to the church in Vienna where the music was considered the finest. It was beautiful clear weather, but I returned to my hotel less cheerful than before. Everywhere were happy family groups, laughing children, parents enjoying their delight, or young couples in holiday attire, evidently on pleasure bent.

On the table as I entered my little sitting-room, lay a large box. I opened it and found beautiful roses with Carl's card attached, and as I lifted them from their wrappings, I saw a small box tied to the stems. I opened it. Within lay a jeweler's case, containing a beautiful and expensive diamond brooch, with a scrap of paper on which was written: "Merry Christmas" in Carl's writing.

Although I had no intention of keeping such a present, just for the moment I was pleased. I admired its beauty, then locked it away, determined to return it in person. But that opportunity did not come for nearly a week. I wrote Carl, thanking him for the roses, and for remembering me so charmingly, adding: "Of course I cannot keep the pin, but will return it to you when next we meet."

A few days later I received a hurried scrawl, ignoring my note, and inviting me to a New Year's Eve party in the studio of an artist with whose name I

was familiar. He was one of the best known Viennese portrait painters, very well off, a man of about forty, and his studio was said to contain many beautiful objects. I was not singing until three days after New Year's, so felt that I might accept.

I donned a dress of an odd, greenish-blue shade which I knew was becoming. When Carl arrived, he surveyed me with evident approval, but asked:

"Why are you not wearing my pin?"

"Oh, Carl, you know that I cannot accept such a present from you," I replied, offering him the little box, which I had ready.

He looked distinctly annoyed.

"I see no reason why you cannot," he grumbled. "Are we not sufficiently good friends for me to give you a Christmas present? I thought you Americans were too sensible to have such silly prejudices, and besides——"

I interrupted him.

"It is quite out of the question," firmly. "Please take it."

"I certainly cannot take it now," he cried, more angry than I had ever seen him. "Put it away if you will not wear it. I am disappointed that you are so prudish, but there is no time to argue now. We are late as it is."

I locked the box in my trunk, silently slipped into the wrap which he held, and followed him down to the cab. I was vexed, hurt.

But before we reached our destination, he began chattering as though nothing had happened.

The studio was really a beautiful suite of rooms,

filled with art treasures which made me long to examine them at leisure. There were rare tapestries, pottery, Persian rugs on the floors; the whole interior suggested the perfection of taste and means to gratify it.

The artist received us genially, thanked me for coming without ceremony, and paid me some exaggerated compliments at which we both laughed. He was a handsome and decidedly dissipated looking man. A number of guests were already assembled. Some of the men looked like artists, some were officers. I could not quite make the women out. Save one short-haired girl who was pointed out to me as a celebrated authoress, all were well dressed. The authoress seemed to be entertaining a group of men very successfully, judging from the shrieks of laughter.

Soon after our arrival, the seductive strains of a popular Viennese waltz of the day lured us into a large room cleared for dancing. It was long since I had danced, and I found the Austrian way of waltzing quite different from mine, but after a few minutes with Carl I caught the step, and danced as untiringly as the others. I had plenty of partners, and enjoyed myself. Then came the summons to supper

This was served in a beautiful dining room. Here we all sat down, some around a magnificently carved dining table, the others at smaller tables. An elaborate supper was served, wine flowed freely, and soon took effect. The behavior of most of the guests became decidedly free. Men unrebuked slipped their arms around the neck or waist of their partners, and although I could not understand a word said by most

of these people, even a foreigner could hardly fail to guess that the conversation partook of the license of the behavior.

Carl, a young artist whom I had found quite interesting, a demure little brunette and I were together at a small table. She confined her conversation chiefly to monosyllables, and rolled her eyes languishingly at Carl. Suddenly some remark at the large table was greeted with roars of laughter, in which all but myself joined. I had not understood it, but when one of the girls seated at the table suddenly leaped upon it, and began executing a most suggestive dance, while she slipped almost out of her very low bodice, I felt that I had remained long enough.

I rose, and turning to Carl, remarked:

"I will ask you to call a cab for me, and then you may return."

Although I had spoken in English, my companions evidently understood me, and looked amazed. Carl asked me irritably what was the matter, told me to sit down, that the evening was just beginning. I informed him decidedly that in that case I had no intention of remaining until its close, and cut short his remonstrances by turning to my host, who sat at the next table. He sprang up, and cried:

"But surely you are not going already, Mademoiselle?"

I had no wish to make a scene, and besides I was more angry with Carl than anyone else, so laughed, and assured him that we poor opera singers were slaves, and only by keeping early hours could we possibly keep our voices. He remonstrated, but I laugh-

ingly persisted, and finally, with a shrug, he accepted my excuses, and bade me good evening very politely. Carl stood beside me looking like a thunder cloud, but went to order a cab called as I donned my wraps. In silence he accompanied me downstairs. I jumped into the cab without waiting for assistance, made no place for him, and started to close the door.

"What do you mean?" he burst out angrily. "Of course since you insist upon going home at such a ridiculously early hour I will accompany you."

"Thank you, I do not wish to take you from your friends, and prefer to return alone."

At that he banged the door shut, gave the driver my address and left me without a backward glance. I was furious. How had he dared take me into such company? Before I retired that night I had made a little package of the box containing the diamond pin, and addressed it ready to send it the next morning.

I did so, but heard nothing in reply. Two days later, Carl called, but I was out. The next morning my thoughts were diverted by receiving a "royal command" to appear at a concert at the Hofburg three days later, but not a word from Carl.

I was decidedly excited when the evening of the concert arrived. The fact that I was to sing at the palace seemed quite to surprise my fellow artists. My heart beat rapidly as I stepped from my carriage to enter the big, brightly lighted palace. I was shown up a side staircase to a room where maids were in attendance to assist me. As I surveyed my reflection in a long mirror, I felt that I was looking my best.

I wore a frock of filmy white material, with a long

train of heavy white satin. Around my white neck were my mother's pearls, my hair had been very well dressed, and I turned from the mirror quite content.

After leaving the dressing-room, I was taken in charge by some court functionary, who escorted me to the room where the other artists assembled. We sat in silence for some time. Then the door into another room was thrown open, and one of the men with his accompanist, who was also mine, was beckoned out, and the door closed behind them. They returned all smiles. Finally my turn came.

I was ushered on to a small stage at one end of a long, brilliantly lighted room, but I was too nervous to take in much of my surroundings. Always I am infinitely more nervous when singing in concert than in opera. There are none of the aids of the operatic stage in concert. One must stand almost still, and yet avoid the appearance of being rooted to the spot. It is far worse than when one can move about, can assist vocal effects to reach over the footlights.

I seemed to please, for after a moment, an elderly gentleman in uniform wearing many decorations, clapped his hands gently, and this was a signal for more hearty applause.

By the time I returned to sing the *Shadow Song,* I was more at my ease. I sang well, and the applause was heartier. I was able to take in a few details of the scene. I recognized the beautiful Empress from her pictures. She was exquisitely dressed, and wore magnificent jewels. I now knew the elderly man beside her to be the Emperor. There were many handsome uniforms, many flashing jewels on the necks of beautiful

young or imposing elderly women. All this I saw as I warbled the difficult passages of the aria.

After the concert was over, we were summoned in turn to receive congratulations from the imperial couple, and were presented with a souvenir. Mine was a beautiful brooch containing a fine emerald. Both Emperor and Empress murmured a complimentary remark in French, I made some reply, curtseyed, and carefully backed from the room. Outside in the corridor, a smart young officer caught my hand for a second, murmuring: "Am I forgiven?" It was Carl, but there was time for no further conversation. All the artists were served supper separately from the guests, and then informed that their carriages were waiting.

The following evening was my last at the Opera. Carl called in the afternoon, but I could not see him. I was leaving for Buda Pesth the following morning, and had engaged my first maid, a young Hungarian who spoke passable French, and was anxious to return to her native land. A note from Carl awaited me at the theater, informing me that he was unable to be present that evening, because of military duties, but would certainly see me before I left.

I had great success, was recalled many times. My colleagues took cordial leave of me, the conductor shook my hand warmly, and wished me: *"Auf baldiges Wiedersehen!"*

When my maid and I drove to the station the next morning, not a word had come from Carl. I installed myself in a first class compartment, the maid left for her own seat. Soon came the signal for the train to start, but just then someone opened the door, sprang

in and slammed the door as the train began moving. It was Carl.

"What are you doing here?" I asked in amazement.

He laughed.

"On my way to Buda Pesth."

"What?" I was amazed indeed.

"Yes. Have a ten days' leave. I only got notice this morning that my application was accepted. *Donnerwetter,* how I hurried! I thought I had surely missed it when a fool of a cabman blocked my road."

I was so surprised that at first I could not find words. Although I had been slightly dreading my first visit to the foreign city I was uneasy. I no longer felt sure of Carl, and his friendship. However, he proceeded to make peace in his own way.

"Now once for all," he began, as the train got under way, "what made you act so at Louis' party?"

I was indignant, and said as much, but he interrupted me.

"Luisa, I cannot see why you should be so touchy. We were all good friends, there for a good time, and——"

"That is not my idea of a good time."

"But, Luisa, what was said? Besides, you could have heard nothing to offend, for you do not understand German——"

"Sometimes it is not necessary to understand a language to guess what is being said."

He looked puzzled.

"My dear girl, you are an artist; you are not bound by rigid conventionalities——"

"Because I am an artist, I see no reason for not being

a lady as well," I interrupted, my slumbering wrath kindling.

"As to that," he objected humorously, "there was nothing said while you were there that might not have been said in a great many houses of our aristocracy, always provided that there were no *jeunes filles* present."

"Then I am sorry for your aristocracy."

"We are not puritanical, I assure you," and he laughed as though at some recollection.

"Is it also the custom in the homes of your aristocracy for ladies to dance a cancan on a supper table, and kiss their partners in full view of the other guests?" I asked.

He laughed again.

"No, no, not before witnesses, I admit. No, you are quite right. But really, little Miss Puritan, you will have much more fun, I assure you, if you get rid of some of these scruples. Why not avail yourself of the liberty permitted an artist?"

"With me liberty does not mean license," I cried. "I have no liking for such doings, and never shall have."

He was silent a moment, then:

"Very well, Princess, I humbly apologize for having taken you there. I had no wish to offend. I thought you would enjoy yourself. You made a great hit with Louis. He wanted to paint you. However, I apologize once more. Am I forgiven?"

Hardly waiting for an answer, he continued quickly:

"And now to show that we are friends again, you

will take this unfortunate pin," and he produced the familiar velvet box.

I shook my head.

"I thought I had made that plain."

"Not at all, for there is no sense in your refusal."

"I do not agree."

"What in so many words is your objection to accepting it?" he asked, with a certain droll expression with which I was familiar, and which meant that he was preparing some trick or trap for me.

"I was brought up," I replied with dignity, "to think that a lady does not accept presents of jewelry from men not of her immediate family."

"Quite so! But you do not live up to your early training."

"What right have you to make such an assertion?" I cried furiously.

"I happen to know that only the other day you accepted a very valuable piece of jewelry from a man," he returned coolly.

"I did not! How dare you!" I burst out.

"You did. I have it on very good authority."

I choked with indignation, and even as I was trying to find a sufficiently withering retort, he laughed teasingly.

"You did! You did!" he reiterated.

I stared at him in silence.

"Perhaps you will deny that you accepted a brooch two days ago from a man with whom you had never spoken until that evening?"

Light began to dawn upon me.

"The mere fact that he was an Emperor should

make no difference when principles are involved," he continued judicially.

"Don't be absurd," I interrupted.

"Pardon me, I think it is you who are absurd. You have known me for years, yet you refuse to accept a trumpery brooch from me for a Christmas present, and without the slightest hesitation accept a far handsomer one from a stranger."

"It was not handsomer," I laughed.

"Not? It should have been, I'm sure. But do you admit the force of my reasoning?" and as I hesitated he continued with sudden change to his natural manner: "Come now, if you will not accept it I shall throw it out of the window," and he laid his hand upon the catch. "It will probably be picked up by some fat, ugly peasant woman. Do you think it fair to compel me unwillingly to contribute to her adornment? Come, be a nice girl."

I hesitated, but when, with a determined expression he began to lower the window, I took the box and shut it in my traveling bag, not at all satisfied with myself for yielding. After that Carl was his most amusing self, and the hours passed quite rapidly. We lunched together, and made no further allusions to our recent estrangement.

The maid duly presented herself, but Carl joked with her in her own language, and finally bade her go back to her own compartment and stay there until we arrived in Buda Pesth, whereupon she withdrew grinning broadly. He expressed dissatisfaction with the hotel at which I had engaged rooms, and tried to persuade me to come to another, which he assured me was far

better, and needless to say, more expensive, but I informed him that I had not the slightest intention of stopping at the same hotel with him. We argued about that for a time, and he was quite cross, but at last shrugged his shoulders, and gave in, declaring that I was the most prudish woman he had ever met. By the time we arrived in Buda Pesth he was quite good-tempered, put me into a cab with my maid, and informed me that he would call the following morning to learn my plans.

I knew that I should probably have a rehearsal, and this proved to be the case. He arrived just as I was starting for the theatre, and announced that he would accompany me. I hesitated, but it was pleasant to have him give directions to the cab driver, and then take his place at my side, quite as a matter of course.

Arrived at the theater, he passed the stage doorman with no difficulty. As we went towards the stage, the *Intendant* was standing in the passage way. Carl greeted him affably, although with condescension; the man, on the other hand, was effusively polite, and acknowledged Carl's presentation to me with much cordiality. After a few minutes' chat, Carl departed, remarking that he would call to take me to luncheon. I began to object, but he cut me short and left.

The rehearsal began smoothly—*Lucia* this time—but the tenor was an unpleasant looking individual, greasy, anything but immaculate in his dress, and with a tendency to scream his music throughout. I made a few suggestions in the duet as politely as possible, saying that I was accustomed to singing this or that passage *pianissimo,* or asking if he did not think that

mezza voce was effective here. He always agreed with me, but I felt sure that he intended to sing it as before, and I was right. On the evening of the first performance he bawled and bellowed through the first two acts, and by the time he reached the beautiful solo in the last act, he was so hoarse that he could hardly get through it.

I determined to trust to the Mad Scene for my effects, since I had no intention of trying to outshriek him in the duet. I found the orchestra, too, over-loud in some of the climaxes, and altogether, when I had finished my big scene with a flutist who continually anticipated me, I was decidedly cross.

Making an effort to appear tranquil, I approached the conductor and asked him very politely if he would arrange for a rehearsal with the flutist and myself, adding that I thought we must be accustomed to different *tempi.* He growled something about "people who did not keep time," but I refused to be annoyed, and waited smilingly for him to set an hour. As I stood there, the *Intendant* came up, and asked me almost obsequiously what was the trouble. The conductor spoke to him in Hungarian, the other replied quickly in the same language, and then with a decided change of manner, the conductor asked me if it would suit me if the flutist and a pianist waited upon me the following morning at my hotel, to go over the passage there.

"That will be more convenient for you, *Mademoiselle,*" he added, in French, in which language our conversation had been conducted, "as you are singing in the evening."

I cordially assented, and it was accordingly arranged,

leaving me rather wondering what the *Intendant* had said so suddenly to change the other's manner to me. I found Carl waiting in the wings, and the obsequious bow with which the *Intendant* bade us good-by first aroused a faint suspicion in my mind.

"Where have you known that man, Carl?" I asked innocently, as we left the theatre.

"Oh, he used to be in Vienna; he was at one time manager of a theater there. I did not know that he held so important a position here. His father used to sell my father oil when we were on our estate."

I tried to put down the man's fawning manner, his sudden intervention on my behalf with the gruff conductor, merely to the desire to oblige the son of one of his father's early customers, but it did not entirely satisfy me. I may add that I never was satisfied with the man's manner to me; beneath an apparently effusive cordiality, there was a kind of veiled insolence, a suggestion of a mutual understanding between us, which annoyed me intensely, while giving me no real excuse for resenting it.

Carl took me for luncheon to a restaurant where a fine Gypsy band played, and I was fascinated with the music. To be sure, I had heard several so-called Gypsy bands before, but none of them had seemed so wild, so characteristic as this one, the verve and rhythm of whose playing made me tap my feet longingly on the floor. We ate dishes with to me unpronounceable names, we drank the wine of the country, and were merry together. Carl seemed more like my friend of the old Trieste days than ever in Vienna. He laughed at my accounts of the greasy tenor, and my

fears that he would ruin my gowns with his embraces on the night of the performance. He had already engaged a box, but evaded replying when I asked him if he proposed occupying it alone. He had plans for the evening for me, which he relinquished only upon my assuring him that never, under any considerations, would I think of going anywhere the evening before I sang, and all the more since my appearance the following evening would be a début. However, he finally became reasonable, reminding me that the entire following day must be devoted to him. He had come to Buda Pesth solely on my account.

My début, despite the tenor and his bawling, was a pronounced success. I found the Hungarian audience very enthusiastic, more like an Italian one to my way of thinking. Carl sat in a box very near the stage. I saw him during the second act, and with him were a very handsome old gentleman, with a long white beard, and wearing a decoration, a dumpy little elderly woman, a young girl, well dressed and decidedly pretty, and an officer in a different uniform from any that I had hitherto seen. They all stared at me, as I could see in the moments when I was not singing, and glanced up at them. After the sextette, which went rather badly I thought, we were recalled several times, but then nothing short of actually murdering that ever popular number could prevent it from being applauded. I had deliberately saved myself for the Mad Scene, and after the long rehearsal which I had had with the flutist that morning, finding him singularly willing to accept my interpretation of the music, it went very well. I saw the old gentleman applauding me quite heartily

as I came before the curtain to bow my thanks to a really enthusiastic audience.

Carl came the next morning, armed with newspapers, for it appeared that he knew enough of the Hungarian language to translate my notices for me. These were very favorable. Then we went to a different restaurant from yesterday's for luncheon, and later drove around the city, and strolled along the handsome *Ferencz Josef Rakpart.* Here a well-dressed throng was promenading, and carriages continually set down new arrivals. We visited one of the gay cafés where a Gypsy band was playing and had coffee and cakes, which Carl insisted were not to be compared with those of Vienna.

"You do not know Vienna yet," he remarked. "When you come back you must get acquainted with it, and then you will say that there is no other city to compare with it."

"But I may never come back," I laughed.

He smiled enigmatically, and I felt oddly confused.

During the ten days that Carl's leave lasted, whenever I was not singing in the evening, we went about together. We visited the Museum, the National Gallery, where Carl's intelligent comments made the pictures doubly interesting to me; we went almost every afternoon to stroll on the Quay along the Danube, which to my disgust was neither blue nor even very beautiful. Twice we went to the theater to hear operettas.

I did not go to the Opera House save for rehearsals and my performances during this time. The ten days passed all too quickly. The last evening came. Carl was to take a late train, so we dined together in our

favorite restaurant, and were rather sentimental over our parting.

Carl was sure that it would not be long before I returned to Vienna, since I had had a decided success there, but I felt less sure of this. I agreed to write, or at all events, to answer his letters. He called a cab to take me back to my hotel, then continue to the railway station with him, whither his luggage had already been sent. He was rather silent as we started off, but just as the cab drew up in front of my hotel, he suddenly slipped his arm around my waist, drew me to him, and kissed me full on the lips before I could resist. Then the door was thrown open by a porter, he assisted me to alight, and had time merely to say good-by, and jump back into the cab. I had no opportunity to protest, or indeed to say anything.

I went upstairs with burning cheeks. During these days together, I had refused to think whither our intercourse might be leading. That I liked Carl better than any other man whom I had ever met, that we were congenial companions, I knew. He had given no sign until that night that he regarded me otherwise, even although I knew well enough now that companions of the opposite sexes could not go about as we were doing, at all events in Europe, and remain merely friends. I had excused myself by thinking that for once, in a strange city, where I knew only artists, it could do no harm for me to avail myself of a certain liberty of action. It could be but for ten days; then Carl would rejoin his regiment, and I might never see him again, or at all events, not for years.

But that night I wanted to see him again. Almost

I would have welcomed a good excuse not to go to Spain. Was he in love with me, I asked myself, admitting for the first time that I loved him? Had he gone back to Vienna to tell his family this? I had now grown sufficiently accustomed to the European viewpoint to realize that few young men took their love affairs so entirely into their own hands as in my native land. Did he intend asking me to marry him? The word had never been mentioned between us. Would his family consent to their son marrying an opera singer? And what would he do if they did not?

I reminded myself that I was no girl of the people, whose voice had raised her to a social level which otherwise she could never have reached. I had condescended to the stage; had adopted a career which would have horrified my parents, my ancestors, quite as much as some of these European families would have been scandalized had a relative of theirs done the same. I considered myself a perfectly suitable *partie* for Carl von Zolter, or any other young army officer, while at least by Italians, my American property would be considered quite a good *dot.*

Should I be willing to abandon my career, that which had been my first thought, indeed my life, or could I continue in it?

I had two brief notes from Carl, written in a lover-like tone. I responded cordially, nothing more. Meanwhile my performances at the opera came and went. I sang *Lucia, Il Barbiere* and *La Traviata,* and was glad to have a different tenor, a young Italian, for the latter opera. I could not bear to have the other one touch me in the scenes we had together.

Several times after Carl's departure, I met the *Intendant.* Once he stopped at my table in a restaurant where I was lunching alone, and managed to lead up to the mention of Carl's name. With evident desire to be agreeable, he spoke of him as a "most charming young gentleman," and added:

"He belongs to one of our most distinguished Austrian families, as doubtless Mademoiselle knows."

As a matter of fact, I had not known it. The little Carl had told me of his family had included no mention of their social position. I would not question the *Intendant,* but he continued, telling me that Carl's father, the old nobleman, was said to be a personal friend of the Emperor. Carl's mother had been a great heiress, as well as a member of an old Austrian noble family.

After Carl had left, I attended several performances at the Opera, but found them very inferior to Vienna, both as to artists and orchestra. I was not sorry when the time came for me to leave Buda Pesth. I missed Carl sadly, and was restless and unsettled, a new state with me. I found myself looking forward to his letters.

On my return to Italy, I had a few hours in Milan, and to my delighted surprise, dear old Pratesi met me there. He, Fano and I had dinner together, and I must, for Pratesi's benefit, tell of my successes, etc., although even Fano expressed himself as more than satisfied with all accounts of me. Pratesi was radiant, and called me his dear daughter.

Arrived in Madrid, I was greeted as a friend by all in the hotel, from manager to waiters. These little things count for much in our nomadic lives. The con-

ductor was presented to me by the director of the theatre at our first rehearsal. I did not like him, although he was cordial, and had "heard much, and always in praise of Signorina Della Rocca."

To my surprise, when I began the rehearsal for my first opera, "La Sonnambula," the tenor was the good-looking Roumanian with whom I had sung in Vienna. He was very affable, and I was glad to see him, for I liked his voice, and enjoyed singing with him. He and the conductor stopped at the same hotel, not mine, and seemed much together.

"La Sonnambula" went very well. My Spanish public of the preceding season had not forgotten me, and my success was such that I did not even mind that with far less applause than my first aria received, the conductor allowed an encore for the tenor's first big solo. I had an encore later in the evening, an insistent one. I might not have noticed at the next rehearsal that the *Maestro* was wearing a very handsome ring, had not one of the singers pointed it out, and told me that it was a gift from the tenor. I do not know whether this was the truth, any more than the additional statement that he paid for most of the meals which they took together, but certainly the tenor was treated with great consideration by the *Maestro,* suggestions at rehearsals being prefaced by *"Mon cher,"* etc. To me the *Maestro* was always polite, but with a shade of familiarity which I did not like, yet which was hardly pronounced enough for me to resent.

The baritone for "The Barber" proved to be good-looking Zanelli. The music did not suit him as well as that of the Franchetti opera, but he wore magnificent

costumes, and his handsome face and figure won the audience. I carried off the honors of the evening, none the less. It was at the close of this first performance of the Rossini opera that my suspicions of the *Maestro* were justified.

I was on the way to my dressing-room when he and I met face to face. He stopped to congratulate me, as I supposed, but instead of the usual compliments, he cried:

"What a charming little Zerlina! Far too pretty to be alone," and before I could guess his intentions, he suddenly stooped and kissed me on the neck.

I was so furious that for a moment I could not speak. Then I said indignantly:

"Never dare to do that again, *Maestro*. I allow such liberties from no man."

His face flushed more from my tone than words, but he sneered, and replied evilly:

"Except members of the Austrian nobility, eh? Rumor has it that you are not so prudish with some of them."

Trembling with rage, I ordered him to let me pass, and after a moment he did so.

In my dressing-room it was some time before I recovered myself sufficiently to meet the people who came to congratulate me. I could not dismiss the insult from my mind. What had the man heard to warrant him in speaking to me thus? Had my intercourse with Carl and his friends in Vienna been sufficiently and evilly commented on? A few moments' reflection convinced me that the Roumanian tenor must have gossiped.

I looked forward to the following morning, when I had a rehearsal of *Lucia,* with some anxiety. What would be the conductor's attitude to me? I determined to ignore the whole affair, and trust that he would do the same.

Apparently he had decided to do so, for the rehearsal proceeded without incident. The Roumanian was the tenor, and before it was over, he asked innocently:

"Is it true that you and the *Maestro* had a little quarrel last evening?"

"A quarrel?" I echoed, and I fancy that my expression was as guileless as his own.

"He told me that he was afraid that you were not satisfied with his congratulations," he continued, gazing at me curiously. "I told him that you were too good an artist not to realize that after the excitement of a performance, he might unintentionally express himself in a manner that you misunderstood, eh?"

"Now what could have put such an idea into your or his head, Monsieur?"

"Then everything is quite as it was, and you are perfectly good friends?" he persisted.

"Who has said that we are not?"

He gave me an odd look.

"In that case you will lunch with us to-day after rehearsal? Only four of us, yourself, the *Maestro,* La Sperella and myself?"

La Sperella was a second rate and very pretty singer of the company to whom the Roumanian had devoted himself since his arrival. She was also notorious.

"I am sorry," I replied indifferently, although inwardly furious, "I have an engagement."

"Such a popular lady here in Madrid, too?" he smiled.

"You forget that this is not my first season here, Monsieur," I replied calmly, and then we both returned to the stage.

I was angry and upset. The letter from Carl which I found on my return to my hotel did not put me in a better frame of mind. I did not like its tone, nor the ending: "with fondest love, your devoted slave." I went off to the Prado, and tried to forget myself in gazing at some of the wonderful paintings there, but without much success.

The next day was cold and rainy; it was impossible to go out. Even a letter from Fano, telling me that the Berlin agent proposed five appearances in that city early in April, did not cheer me. Towards evening, however, the weather cleared, and I tried to look upon this as a good omen, and forget the unpleasant incident.

I went to the theater with the maid I had engaged, a vivacious French girl named Francine, who delighted in serving a prima donna, and was more like a typical stage maid than I had believed possible. I did not see the *Maestro* before going on the stage.

All opera-goers are familiar with *Lucia's* opening aria, a beautiful bit, I think. I began the sustained music as usual, but what was the matter. I tried to meet the conductor's eye, but he was smiling placidly. The tempo dragged so that I could hardly finish my phrases; I who had often been complimented upon my ability to sing long phrases in one breath. I tried to

hurry, but short of an open clash, could do nothing. The aria went badly, yet when the tenor came on, and we began the duet, the number went as usual.

"What is the matter with the *Maestro* this evening?" I asked, during a pause in our singing.

"What do you mean, Signorina? I have noticed nothing."

"Did you hear the tempo at which he took my aria?" I asked angrily.

"I was in my dressing-room, and did not hear your first number. But if you are not well, if you wished it hurried, why did you not speak to him. I am sure he would gladly have helped you out. What is the trouble? Have you a cold?"

"I am feeling unusually well, am in splendid voice," I answered. "And then, you know, I have sung *Lucia* so many times that it would be almost impossible to put me out."

Our eyes met for an instant, and then we warbled of our undying love, but when I was in my dressing-room I did some thinking. There came a knock, and Zanelli, who was singing that night, came in, surveyed himself with satisfaction in the long mirror, then asked:

"What was the matter with the aria? Surely you did not take such a tempo at the rehearsal?"

"You noticed it?"

"Of course. Who could help noticing?"

Although I was so familiar with the music that, as I had told the tenor, it would be difficult to put me out, yet I know that the *Maestro* could easily ruin my effects in the Mad Scene, my great scene. If he took it too

slowly, my *coloratura* would count for nothing, while if he rushed the tempo, even I would be unable to execute the brilliant runs effectively. I would meet with, if not a fiasco, but moderate success. Suddenly I turned to Zanelli with my most ingratiating smile.

"I wonder if you would do me a favor?"

Of course he replied that he would do anything, I had but to command, etc.

"Would you see if the *Maestro* is in his room next door, and ask him if he will come in here for a moment before going into the orchestra pit?"

Zanelli assented willingly enough, and a few minutes later there was a rap at my door. I had sent my maid away on some pretext, and opened the door myself. There stood the *Maestro,* smiling maliciously, and asked in what way he could serve me.

"Will you come in, please?" I asked, coldly civil.

If he were surprised he gave no sign, but entered, and I closed the door behind him, for I had caught sight of a little group in the corridor.

"Maestro," I began calmly, not raising my voice, "you chose deliberately to ruin my first aria—wait a moment, please," as he began protesting; "you did so for reasons of your own, and I have no intention of inquiring into them. I have just this to say. I do not intend that you shall ruin the Mad Scene for me."

He glared at me.

"What do you mean, Signorina?" he cried. "Do you dare to accuse me——"

"I accuse you of nothing," I resumed, proud to note that my voice was perfectly under control, nor did I raise it. "As I say, I accuse you of nothing. I state

facts which I am willing to repeat to anyone. I do not intend that you shall ruin my big scene. I intend to have the success that I always have with it, that I had in this very theatre last winter. If my success is interfered with I shall know how to act. If you take the *tempo* otherwise than as we rehearsed it, and which is authoritative, as I fancy no one knows better than yourself, look out, that is all."

The man was so angry that he actually shook; his face was crimson, for a moment he evidently could not speak. Then he shrieked:

"What do you mean? How dare you speak to me like this? I refuse to tolerate it. Have you forgotten that I am the musical director?"

"Not at all," I replied icily. "That is why I sent for you."

"What do you propose doing?" he gasped, half beside himself with rage. "I will not have a scene, I——"

"There will be no scene unless you make one," I shrugged. "But if you really wish to know what I shall do if you try to ruin my success I will tell you. I shall simply stop singing and walk off the stage, and I shall not return. But I think that Her Majesty, the Queen, as well as some others whom I refrain from naming, will be interested to hear my story, and the reason why I stopped the performance, if I am obliged to do so. That is all now. Do not let me detain you."

He gasped again; seemed on the point of choking, began to speak, thought better of it, then flung open the door and rushed out, banging it behind him.

The second act proceeded uneventfully, save that several of the singers gave me curious glances, which

made me wonder if any rumor had already spread through that busy hotbed of gossip, behind the scenes. Several times in the pauses of our music I caught the tenor staring at me with an odd expression.

As we were leaving the stage after the close of the scene, and an unusually good performance of the Sextette, I found him at my side. He spoke of the Sextette, then remarked casually:

"You sang here last winter, I believe you said?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever met Her Majesty, the Queen?"

"Oh, yes, I sang at the palace."

"They say she is quite fond of artists."

"She was simply charming to me, I can assure you of that," I replied with enthusiasm, and as we had reached the door of my dressing-room, I slipped in with a bright smile. I felt in good spirits as I donned my white peignoir, and almost sure that there would be no scene that evening save the one intended by the composer.

There was none, but there was great enthusiasm after I had finished singing, and so many recalls that I lost count of them, while the fact that the *Maestro* and tenor stood together in the wings, conversing in low tones, troubled me not in the least.

But the following morning I sent a most polite note to the manager of the theater, asking if he could make it convenient to call at my hotel during the day, and if not if he would make an appointment for me to come to him.

As I had expected, a prompt and courteous note was returned, informing me that Señor Quisada would do

himself the pleasure and honor, etc., all the polite phrases that a punctilious Spaniard employs, of waiting upon me at four o'clock that afternoon.

I donned my prettiest frock; I sent my maid to purchase pastries, and ordered a bottle of excellent Spanish wine to be sent to my room. He was announced. We exchanged the usual polite greetings, he complimented me upon my great success of the evening before, assuring me that I seemed to have surpassed even all my previous efforts. I replied as best I could. Then having prepared the ground, as it were, for the real business of the visit, he sat back and waited for me. I appeared to hesitate, began speaking, paused, glanced appealingly at him, in short excited his curiosity as much as possible, then sighed, and spoke:

"Your kindness overwhelms me, *Señor,* and if anything makes my task more difficult."

He waited.

"I was engaged here for twelve performances, I believe."

"Certainly, *Señorita,* but it would be easy to extend your engagement if your other plans——"

"Ah, you do not understand!" I cried tragically. "*Señor,* I have sent for you to ask you as a friend if it is possible to cancel my contract?"

I knew that I had chosen the moment well. After my great success of the evening before, greater than at either of the two preceding performances, or even than during my engagement of the preceding year, he would not be disposed to listen favorably to a proposal to cancel the remaining performances for which I was under contract.

"My dear *Señorita,* what are you asking?" he cried, with flattering dismay. "Surely you are not serious?"

"I fear that I am only too serious," I replied, sighing again.

"But what has happened? Surely you are not ill? You look in the best of health——"

"I am indeed in the best of health, and my voice was never better," I modestly interrupted.

"Then what is it? What can you mean? I do not understand."

Again I appeared to hesitate, then:

"*Señor,* you have been so kind that I will speak frankly. I am asking to have my contract cancelled because I can readily understand that you would not wish that one of your artists should appear to dictate to you in the management of your theatre." I paused.

He stared at me too amazed to find words.

"Yet," I continued sadly, "that is what I should be forced to attempt were I to remain and wish to continue pleasing the public."

"*Señorita,* please explain frankly. If you have any complaints to make," he at last found voice, "I assure you that I will do anything reasonable to gratify you——"

"Of the management I have not the slightest cause to complain," I hurried to explain. "I have always, both this season and last, been treated with the greatest courtesy and consideration. If that were only all——" Again I paused.

"But when then is it?" the poor man cried.

I tried to look plaintive.

"Alas, *Señor,*" I then resumed, "I regret inexpres-

sibly to say that if I were to continue singing here, I could do so only on condition that the gentleman who conducted the orchestra last evening never again conduct any performance in which I participate."

That he was astounded was quite evident.

"But what fault have you to find with his conducting?" he finally asked.

"With his conducting in general, none. He is an excellent musician, with a fine grasp of the orchestra."

"Well, then?"

"But as a conductor for me I find him, shall we say, *antipatico* in the extreme?"

He waited, evidently expecting me to continue, but I was silent, and played with the bracelet I was wearing, the one given me by the Queen the preceding year, and which I had clasped around my arm as an effective bit of costuming for this scene. His eyes fell upon it as I meant that they should. The royal monogram was easily distinguishable from where he sat."

"You are quite serious about this, *Señorita?*" he then demanded, with sudden change of tone.

"Indeed I am," I replied very seriously.

"Will you explain why you have told me this?"

"Were you in the audience last night during the first act?"

"No, I was not. I was busy in my office."

"Did you hear nothing that would explain?"

"One can always hear gossip in a theater," he answered impatiently.

"Yes, but I fancy that in this case you heard the true reason." I smiled as I said this.

"*Señorita,* I wonder if you quite realize what you

are asking me to do. Change the conductor, upset plans——"

"But only for nine performances, or not at all if you consent to cancel my contract."

"And if I refuse to do either?" he asked curiously. "Your contract holds."

"*Señor,* there is one thing that I prize more highly than money, forfeits for breaking a contract, with all the injury that to do this would undoubtedly work me."

"And that is?" he questioned, after waiting a moment for me to continue.

"My artistic reputation," I replied solemnly. "And I assure you that that would be endangered whenever I sang with that gentleman whose name we have not mentioned."

"You are sure that you are not mistaken?"

"Absolutely so after last night. I assure you that it was only because I threatened that I would leave the stage, and break up the performance if necessary, that I was safe. Needless to say, I could not go through with that every evening."

He stared at me in silence for a moment, then laughed rather ruefully.

"*Señorita,* I cannot break the contract that we have with that gentleman," he objected.

"I perfectly understand that," I hastened to assure him. "But let *Maestro* Vanni"—a younger man, engaged as assistant—"conduct for me, and I assure you that I will make no more complaints."

"He is far less experienced."

"I know, and also less experienced in deviltry."

He laughed again.

"Do you not think that if I were to speak to that certain person it might answer?"

"If you were to speak to him, *Señor,* he would assure you that the circumstances to which I allude existed only in my imagination. He would impress upon you that he always has been, always would be delighted to contribute in every possible manner to the success of *Señorita* Della Rocca, you would both exchange salutations, and that would be the end of the matter as far as you were concerned. But he would take the first opportunity to harm me, and unfortunately, a conductor has too many opportunities. No, I really am not mistaken. There is, of course, a reason for all this. Into that I cannot go, it is far too personal. But I must protect myself, even if I am forced to give up a contract which I highly prize."

"That, I assure you, *Señorita,* shall not happen," said the manager after a moment's reflection. "I will give you my word of honor that you shall not be asked to sing with Benadetti again. Does that satisfy you?"

"Perfectly!" I cried, and we shook hands. Then we dismissed the subject, sipped our wine, and the manager departed, leaving me reassured.

I never breathed one word of my conversation with the manager, nor do I believe that he repeated it, save to the necessary few, but rumors spread in the theatre, and although I evaded and denied, I think it was generally known that something had happened. The *Maestro* never spoke to me after that, and although I do not doubt that he tried in every possible way to injure me, yet apparently he did not succeed. He was a newcomer in Madrid, whereas I had a previous successful season

to my credit, and was popular; hence he was handicapped in his malice. The assistant conductor, who for my remaining nine performances wielded the baton, proved quite satisfactory. The performances went smoothly, and I snapped my fingers at Benadetti's threats, which were duly repeated to me, that he would see that I never sang in Madrid again, in Buenos Aires, where he had a contract for the following season, and in other cities too numerous to mention.

Benadetti may or may not have had something to do with the fact that I was not offered a contract for Buenos Aires that summer, but if so it did no harm, for when the time came, I had a better offer. He did not prevent me from singing in Madrid, for although more than three years elapsed before I sang there again, it was not from lack of offers.

I wrote Pratesi a long letter telling of the affair, and asking him to write me frankly whether or not I had acted wisely. Dear old *Maestro!* He never read my letter. It was returned to me unopened with a few lines from Maria, announcing his sudden death. He had not been feeling well for several days, she wrote, but had refused to consult a physician. One evening he complained of feeling tired, and went to his room earlier than usual. In the morning he, always the first one up, did not appear. When she went to call him, he lay in bed with so peaceful an expression that she believed him asleep, until in trying to arouse him, she found that he was already cold. He must have died in his sleep.

I was greatly distressed by this news, which I received upon my return from an especially successful

performance of "The Barber." I had indeed lost my best and truest friend, and could hardly realize that I should never see his kindly face again. There was now no one to whom my successes were always of supreme importance; no one in whose affections I occupied first place, for I knew that I had been dear as a daughter to him. No one? My thoughts flew to Carl, but I felt no real certainty of his affection.

Fortunately a letter the next morning perforce diverted my mind. Fano wrote that he had signed a contract for me with the Berlin agent for five operatic performances, with the possibility of three additional ones, and for three concerts in April and early May. I must, however, sing the rôle of *Gilda* in "Rigoletto." Bordoni, the great Italian baritone of my Naples and South American seasons, had been specially engaged for *Rigoletto,* which was one of his famous rôles. I had never sung *Gilda,* and had but six weeks in which to study it while singing my regular performances. I was therefore so busy that I had time and thoughts for nothing else. Carl complained bitterly that I wrote him mere notes.

Arrived in Lisbon, matters promised to run smoothly. I liked the artists, and had three days with dear Starnio, who was finishing her engagement as mine began. She went with me to the theatre for my first rehearsal, and presented me to the *Maestro,* an Italian under whose baton she had often sung. He was not only a fine musician, but affable, only roused to impatience under great provocation. He got more out of orchestra and singers than almost anyone else whom I have known. All responded with a will. Tired they

might be, but they made fresh efforts if *Maestro* Campanini wished, and so, with no better artists than in Madrid, we gave far better performances. We all knew that if we worked hard, the *Maestro* worked harder, and spurred our faltering energies to do our best.

I was in Lisbon for one month only, and gave ten performances of "Il Barbiere," "La Traviata," "Sonnambula," and "Damnation of Faust." I saw scarcely anything of the city, save during daily walks and drives for my health's sake. My time was spent chiefly in the theater, or in my hotel sitting-room. Friends I had none, and no time to make any. I saw my fellow artists only in the theater, nor did I go there except for rehearsals and my own performances. This contrary to the custom of artists, for we usually drift naturally to the theater, even when not singing. That is our element, the one place where we are perfectly at home. In Lisbon, however, I was so busy that when not actually singing I rested.

Carl wrote regularly; his letters were lover-like, yet often left me with a feeling of dissatisfaction. He wrote that he missed me "even more than I should have believed possible," and "the next time you come to Vienna you must stay, that is positive. If you insist upon singing in opera we must get you an engagement here."

Such sentences made me wonder just what he really meant. Were they mere phrases not to be taken seriously? Never once did he allude even remotely to making me his wife, yet always these assertions that

we must be together, that he was "too lonely" without me.

Sometimes I lay awake half the night pondering this question, only angrily to write him the next morning that our correspondence had best cease. But I never sent these letters, always eventually deciding to let matters drift. He knew that I was returning to Berlin in April, but only two days before I left Lisbon, Fano notified me that I was engaged for two concerts and four performances at the opera in Vienna. One of the former was fixed for a date before the beginning of my Berlin engagement. "You will just be able to keep it by going directly through from Lisbon," he wrote.

I sent a telegram to Carl, telling him the hour of my arrival in Vienna. This would be a surprise, for when last I had written him, I had expected to go first to Berlin.

The journey was tiresome in the extreme. The most beautiful part of it, across the Pyrenees, I passed through at night. The train was delayed, and it was late in the afternoon when we rolled into the station at Vienna.

CHAPTER X

A LOVE EPISODE

THE first person I saw as I stepped out of my compartment was Carl. I had pictured our first meeting after these months of separation, but the reality surpassed my imagination. My heart seemed hammering; I wondered if its beating were not audible to others. It was only a moment before I recovered my self-control, gaily asked and answered questions. He squeezed my hand, assuring me how glad he was to see me "at last," but my maid was close at my heels. Carl asked if I had engaged rooms, and frowned when I named the hotel, muttering in English something about "changing all that," but put me in a cab, then jumped in after me.

As I expected word at the hotel when my first rehearsal was called, he followed me upstairs. It was to be at five o'clock that same day.

"Then I will call for you afterwards, and we can dine together. Take a cab from here, and you will not need your maid," he remarked, and after kissing me before I realized his intention, under the eyes of the deeply interested Francine, he took his leave.

I was more than willing to dine with him, but assured myself that we must arrive at an understanding that evening. I tried rather unsuccessfully to believe that

he was but awaiting the moment when we should be alone to ask me the question that I assured myself was trembling on his lips. Some foreboding of what lay before me I must have had. I felt none of the happy confidence of the ordinary girl who loves and believes herself beloved.

The rehearsal went well; the orchestra leader, Waldberger, was wonderful. I had never sung with a more inspiring man. My numbers went so well that when I finished, the orchestra applauded heartily, and when Carl called for me I was in an exalted frame of mind.

We dined in a restaurant where, surrounded by a gay crowd, there was little chance for intimate conversation. Carl asked my immediate plans, and I told him that I must leave the morning after the concert for Berlin. There was only about a week for rehearsing my new and difficult rôle with Bordoni, who had so identified himself with his own, that he would have all the stage business planned and it would be for me to adapt myself to his ideas in our scenes together. Carl grumbled over the shortness of my stay in Vienna at this time, questioned me as to subsequent plans after my later Vienna engagement, and seemed relieved that as yet I had none. He remarked that, at all events, I was not to go to South America that summer.

He alluded to the possibility of my spending the summer near Vienna, assuring me that there were delightful places in the surrounding country, and I laughed, not really taking him seriously. I was in the highly strung condition of the artist after a success, for such the rehearsal had been, such I felt would be

the morrow's performance. I was a woman once more, after weeks of separation, alone with the man she loves. Carl to a certain extent shared my mood, and we were merry over our dinner, laughed at each other's speeches as though they were the embodiment of wit, although we really laughed from pure joy of living.

We lingered at table, and when at last we rose to leave I told Carl that I must return home at once, that I might be in good voice for the next day. He objected that I was a slave to my profession, but accompanied me to my hotel and left me, after I promised that he might take me to dinner again the next evening. I went upstairs to my room happy.

The concert was a great success. I was recalled again and again, and during the intermission the conductor chatted with me for ten minutes or more. He asked if it were true that I was returning for appearances at the Opera. I told him yes, and for another concert, mentioning the organization with which I was to appear. He congratulated me, told me that it was an important one, and that success such as he was kind enough to predict for me, with this particular organization, would establish my reputation with the truly musical set of Vienna. Moved by sudden impulse, I consulted him as to my numbers, not yet decided upon.

"How about a group of Schubert songs for one number?" he asked after deliberation.

I was ashamed to confess that I had never sung one. Had he known how limited my song repertoire was he would have had a poor opinion of me. Fortunately he accepted my excuse that I did not sing in German as a

valid one, although urging me to learn to sing the great German songs in the original.

"How about an aria?" I asked.

"At a chamber music concert, with piano accompaniment? Oh, no, *mein Kind,* never!" was his emphatic reply. He suggested a group of old Italian songs, then mentioned a waltz song by a young French composer of whom I had never heard. To my joy, he modestly assured me that he would be glad to go over this waltz with me on my return, if I cared to have him. I thanked him enthusiastically. I was almost prouder of this offer from so eminent a musician than of my afternoon's success with the public. Later, I was assured that I might well be proud, for he refused pupils who would pay him whatever he asked, and many an artist had vainly begged for what he offered me.

Although a trifle tired, the excitement had not worn off when Carl called to take me to dinner. I fancied that he was not as talkative as on the previous evening. He was restless, excited, with fits of silence.

Finally I told him that as I was leaving rather early the next morning, it would be well to linger no longer at table. He paid the bill, ordered a cab, and after putting me in it, gave the driver a direction, and sprang in beside me. He began chatting gaily about nothing in particular. I found it difficult to reply in the same vein. I was suddenly conscious of fatigue, and a feeling of depression, of dissatisfaction with Carl, with myself, everything. All at once, though not familiar with Vienna, I noticed that we did not seem to be going to my hotel, and called Carl's attention to this, but he

merely said that he wanted to show me something, and that the man was not far out of the way. In a few minutes, the cab stopped before a tall building. Carl sprang out, helped me out, paid and dismissed the cab, assuring me, as I began to object, that in this section cabs could be had at all times.

I hesitated, but finally followed him into a handsome entrance hall. He motioned me into a lift, and said something in German to the lift man. We stepped out into an upper corridor from which several doors opened. Carl took out a key, opened one of these, and drew me into an ante-room, from which a curtained archway opened.

Before I could draw back, he closed the door behind us, and catching me in his arms, kissed me madly.

"Carl, what do you mean? Where have you brought me?" I gasped.

He laughed, and drew me through the archway into a beautifully furnished drawing-room. From this opened a dining room, and on the opposite side was a closed door. As I stood half bewildered, he opened this, and led me into a charmingly dainty room, with hangings and furniture of pale blue satin, while beyond was a bedroom. But by this time I had recovered myself.

"What does this mean, Carl?" I asked, in a voice which in spite of my efforts shook. "Where have you brought me?"

"Darling, sweetheart, *ma mignonne,* to what is to be our home. No more hotels. When you come back you will come to your own apartment, where you and I will be the happiest people in the world. Say you

will come. That you like it," and he tried to kiss me again.

I freed myself.

"I do not understand you," I faltered.

He laughed.

"Nonsense. You have long known that I am crazy about you. What is the use of pretending? Come now, confess that you have long known that I love you, and that you love me."

I believe that even then I hoped that he would say the few words that would make the situation right. I would not face the truth. But as once more he tried to embrace me, I drew still further away.

"You have evidently made a mistake, Captain von Zolter," I said, although my voice shook. "Please let me pass. I wish to return to my hotel immediately."

"I will do nothing of the kind," he stormed. "I will be played with no longer. What do you wish? To drive me mad? Have I not done everything in my power to prove to you that I love you? that I adore you?"

I moved towards the door, but he blocked my path. Then suddenly to my wrath, my disgust, I burst into tears. I could endure the strain no longer. Carl forgot his wrath. He called Heaven to witness that he would not for the world cause me unhappiness, and when I had achieved some measure of self-control, begged me to sit down and talk matters over quietly. I shook my head; I could not speak, and finally he let me pass. In silence he followed me from the apartment; in silence we waited for the lift.

Outside the building, I hailed a passing cab, jumped

in and in a voice which no longer shook, but which sounded oddly in my own ears, I told him that I did not wish his company. He kept his temper.

"I will come to the train to-morrow morning."

I told him that I did not wish him to do so.

"Luisa, I must and will see you before——"

I ordered the driver to proceed at once, and short of making a scene, there was nothing for Carl to do but draw back, and give me my way. I did not look at him, and in a moment the cab turned a corner, and he was out of sight.

Never had I spent such a night. Sleep was out of the question. I paced the floor, clenching my hands, now with rage at the insult which had been offered me, since it was impossible to delude myself longer, now weeping for my lost happiness. I wondered if it were not a hideous nightmare, from which I soon might awaken. I reproached myself for having begun this acquaintance with a young, idle man, who saw in me merely an opera singer, hence fair game for a flirtation to be carried as far as he chose.

Never before or since had I made friends in such a manner. Why had I believed Carl different from others? Yet I could not be mistaken. In those early Trieste days we had been good comrades, nothing more. There had been no thought of love, or of evil in either mind.

I recalled that I had felt a change in him when first I came to Vienna. He was in love with me, that was it, for even although such love were unworthy the name, I had no doubt that now he loved me. He knew

too that I loved him. He evidently had no doubts, and had fancied that I would yield to his wishes.

Ah, the humiliation of such love! My pride was in arms. I told myself that I would put him out of my life, would forget him, and raged to think that I, Luisa Della Rocca, should have been classed with any light of love. But pride proved a poor comforter.

This went on for hours; I lost all track of time. Finally, utterly exhausted, I threw myself dressed as I was upon my bed, and fell into an uneasy sleep, from which I awoke as the gray dawn was stealing in at the windows.

I dragged myself to my feet, feeling as though I had been beaten, aching in every limb. One glimpse in the mirror frightened me. My eyes were red and swollen, my face gray. I had work to do if I were to carry out a sudden idea.

On the table lay the *Oesterreichsches Kursbuch* which Carl had brought me the day before, when we had chosen my train from it. The one I had planned to take was the fastest, leaving at ten o'clock, but hastily turning the pages, I found that another, slower, left at eight-thirty. This one I resolved to take, and run no risk of finding Carl at the station.

I bathed my eyes, changed my clothes, and made a careful toilette. By this time it was after six, so I rang, told the sleepy waiter who answered to call my maid, and bring coffee for us both at once. It appeared with Francine, alert and ready for anything. Briefly I told her that I had decided on an earlier train, and although she must have known from my appearance

that there was something wrong, she made no comment.

We caught the train. A tip to the guard secured us good seats, and I kept Francine with me. I had a dread of being alone. I felt shaken and helpless.

I breathed more freely when we moved out of the station. There was but one other occupant of the compartment, an elderly man who paid no attention to me. I tried to rest, for I knew that a period of work and stress lay before me. I should need all my strength of will if I were not to be an utter failure. I set my thoughts on the rôle I was to sing, and finally I must have fallen asleep.

I awoke to find Francine standing over me.

"Luncheon is now being served, Mademoiselle," she murmured.

I sat up with a start. I bade her go to luncheon, but told her I wished nothing. In a few minutes, however, she returned with a cup of steaming soup, and stood there until to get rid of her I drank it.

In spite of myself, I felt better.

It was early the next morning when we arrived in Berlin. To my satisfaction, I discovered a new accomplishment in Francine. She spoke some German. She accordingly attended to everything, and soon we were rolling through streets whose shops were still tightly closed, and where only a few stragglers were in evidence, to the hotel where I had stayed before.

Francine engaged the rooms, ordered coffee, and when it was brought handed it to me with her new, authoritative manner. She bustled about, laying out my belongings, produced a wrapper, and put me into it,

and directed me to lie down. I meekly obeyed, and when, several hours later, she brought me a letter from the management of the theatre, I was more like myself. A piano rehearsal of *Rigoletto,* for the principal artists only, was to be held that afternoon.

I rose, dressed, and went out. Taking a cab, I drove about the city, doing some shopping, and among other things, buying the waltz song, although I wondered if I should ever sing it. Then I lunched, and returned to the hotel.

Francine had quite transformed the ugly rooms. She had bought flowers, and made them look almost homelike. What she really thought had happened to me I do not know. She asked no questions, and looked after me in a manner which I should not have expected of her, gay, vivacious little creature that she had always seemed to be.

As I was donning my hat again, to go to the rehearsal, she came to me, and began making little dabs at my face. For the first time, save on the stage, I allowed rouge to be put on my cheeks. I could not deny that the effect was good. I might pass now as merely somewhat tired from a long journey.

Arrived at the theater, I was greeted by several acquaintances of the former season, including the conductor, and then Bordoni appeared. Hailing me as an old friend, he asked so many questions that I could not answer one-half, and then the rehearsal began. It went fairly well. The tenor was a young German, with a clear, strong voice, but explosive style of singing, and very odd the *Donna é mobile* sounded to me in German.

An orchestral rehearsal was set for the next day but

one, and Bordoni asked if I would come to his hotel the following day at noon, as he already had a piano, and go over the big duet with him there. He urged me to dine with him after the rehearsal, expressing himself as dying to have a good talk, and hear some Italian, instead of "this awful German everywhere," but I made some excuse, and returned to my hotel. I was in no mood for company.

I had little time for brooding over my troubles, however, which was well for me. When Bordoni and I began rehearsing the next day, he was far too great an artist not to devote himself entirely to his rôle. He was kindly, with none of the arrogance which his position might have warranted, although for my part, I have found that arrogance is usually combined with inferiority. He expressed himself as delighted with the manner in which I sang my music, and predicted a great success. We worked for nearly two hours, when he declared that he must have food.

This time he would listen to no excuse, I simply must dine with him. Downstairs in the hotel restaurant, one of the best in Berlin, he ordered as Italian a meal as possible, and over this we lingered, talking over old times, asking questions about old acquaintances, etc. He was going to Buenos Aires the last of the month, and seemed surprised that I was not to be of the company. I did not tell him what may have been the reason. (I never did know whether Benadetti really had anything to do with my non-engagement.) He asked me about the French baritone who had sung in Buenos Aires the preceding season, and I was on the point of expressing my enthusiastic admiration for him,

but checked myself in time, and, Yankee fashion, answered his questions by asking if he, Bordoni, had ever heard him.

He had not, but had "heard that his voice was not at all remarkable, much worn," etc. Oh, how hard it is for us artists to admit publicly that another singer in our own particular line equals, if indeed he does not surpass, us! There are so few who will do so. I was wise enough not to contradict Bordoni, and when he added magnanimously: "But they say he is a fine actor, is that so?" I replied with measured enthusiasm that he was a good actor, and especially understood the art of costuming, but that I had heard finer voices, glancing meaningly at my companion (few finer voices, to be truthful, had I really heard, but that I did *not* say), whereupon Bordoni beamed upon me, and his spirits became exuberant.

His society did me a world of good, and for several hours I was almost cheerful. The worst part of the twenty-four hours came when I lay in my bed, and vainly tried to sleep. It was nearly morning when at last I dozed.

I was in wretched voice at the orchestral rehearsal the next morning, and to Bordoni's kindly questioning if I were not well, for he knew me sufficiently to notice the lack of brilliancy in my voice, I pleaded a slight cold. I asked the manager to recommend a physician; he was kindly concerned, and gave me the address of one who, he assured me, treated almost all of Berlin's great singers. Just as I was turning away, he called after me to say that, forgetting the rehearsal that morning, he had sent to my hotel a letter which had

arrived for me by the first post. I thought at once of Carl, but checked my first mad impulse to hurry back to the hotel as fast as a cab could take me. No, the letter should wait, especially since I felt that its contents would but make me more wretched than I already was.

I lunched, then drove to the physician's address. I was fortunate in finding him at home. He listened sympathetically to my plea that I could not sleep, and had come to ask him for something to induce this.

"I am in wretched voice already," I concluded, "and in about a week must sing an important rôle at the Opera."

He shook his head, and suggested that he examine my throat rather than prescribe opiates. Although I assured him that the trouble was not there, of course he had his way. He said nothing while making a thorough examination, but when he had finished, cried enthusiastically:

"Mademoiselle, permit me to congratulate you. You have perhaps the most perfect singer's throat that it has ever been my fortune to examine. It is absolutely healthy."

"I told you so," I grumbled ungratefully, but he laughed.

"So you do not sleep? Do you mean not as much as you wish, or really not enough?"

"I believe I dozed for perhaps two hours last night, and not more than that the night before, or the night before that," I replied curtly.

He shook his head.

"No, that is not enough. What is the trouble?"

"That is neither here nor there," I replied quickly. "I am very much upset and worried by something that happened recently, but it is a trouble that I must bear as best I may, and forget as soon as I can. Meanwhile I must sleep, or give up my engagement at the Opera, and you will understand that that would be a serious thing for me to do."

He nodded, asked a few more questions, and finally gave me a prescription which I might take at night if I were quite sure that I could not otherwise sleep. Then, telling me to return two days before my first performance, he dismissed me with a sympathetic handclasp, and bade me take courage.

"You are very young, Mademoiselle," were his parting words. "Remember that time heals all sorrows, or many of us would never live to old age."

Thanks to his prescription, I slept that night. Without it I do not believe I could have slept at all, for I found awaiting me a letter from Carl, a mad, disconnected scrawl, now venting his anger at me and my "senseless prejudices," now despairingly asking how I could treat him thus. Was it nothing to me that he was suffering the tortures of the damned? etc. He protested his love for me, and vowed that he neither could nor would live without me. Again I walked the floor desperately struggling to keep back my sobs, trying to think of my voice, and that it surely was of paramount importance to me.

Next day my voice was far from being in its usual condition. I went to the stage door keeper, and tipping him well, begged him to have any mail that came for me to the theatre sent to my hotel, for I was, I

assured him, "so absent minded,"—one trait always excused in an artist—that I was afraid I might lay it down in the theater if it were given me there. I then showed Francine the envelope of Carl's letter, and asked her if she thought she could recognize that handwriting. She eagerly assured me that she could.

"Then when any letters addressed in that handwriting arrive for me," I continued, "I wish you to put them away for me, and not give them to me, even if I should ask for them, until after my first appearance as *Gilda*. Will you do this and not fail me?"

Francine's eyes almost bulged out of her head with excitement, but she assured me: "But yes, Mademoiselle, I will keep them all. Mademoiselle need have no fears, she shall not have so much as a peep at them until after the début."

Francine was as good as her word, and even refused to tell me if any letters had arrived later, pursing her lips, and saying in a very stagey manner: "Mademoiselle, I do not hear," until in spite of myself I laughed, and ceased to question her.

I kept my appointment with the physician, and reported that I slept, but only by taking his medicine. He looked me over carefully, found my nerves unsteady, and finally gave me a small vial.

"This is something of which it is useless to ask the name, for I will not tell you," he remarked. "As I realize the importance of your first appearance, I will give you this small quantity. Take one half of it a few minutes before going on the stage, and the rest in the middle of the evening if your voice does not seem

in good condition. Take the sedative to-night and to-morrow if you must, then throw away the bottle."

"There will be nothing left in it," I wailed.

He laughed.

"I know that perfectly," he replied good-naturedly, "nor would the pharmacist fill it again for you without another prescription. If you still cannot sleep after three or four nights come to see me again, but I believe that you have a good, strong will, and can help yourself now. I shall, if possible, be in the theatre to hear you sing. "Rigoletto" is one of my favorite operas, so show me what you can do."

I thanked him and left, feeling in better spirits. There was a wholesome genuineness about the man that seemed to help one almost in spite of oneself, and assuredly I did not wish to give way to my grief. For pride's sake, if for no other reason, I would conquer it, and get back as much as possible into my old contented if unemotional way of life.

Rehearsals proceeded smoothly, the performance promised to go well, and Bordoni assured me that he expected great things of me, now that I had evidently "entirely recovered from the cold."

On the eventful evening, we had a brilliant success. The Kaiser sent for Bordoni and me to come to the royal box, and congratulated us both in Italian, which he spoke quite fluently. He expressed the hope of hearing us soon again. Bordoni was charming to me; declared that I was the best *Gilda* with whom he had ever sung, and although I discounted this, allowing for the excitement of the moment, still I knew that he was pleased. A telegram from Carl was handed me

after the performance, demanding why I had not answered his letters, but even that could not entirely quench my spirits, and when I returned to the hotel with Francine, herself almost as excited as though she were the prima donna, I refrained from asking for my letters, determined to wait until the next day before undergoing what I felt would be an ordeal.

The next morning after Francine had brought me my coffee, and informed me, on the authority of one of her German admirers, that I had had a triumph, that "all the critics said so," I summoned my courage, and asked for any letters that had arrived during the past few days. For a moment she hesitated, seemed on the point of saying something, then left the room, and returning, silently handed me three envelopes.

I was tempted to destroy them unopened. Would not that be the best thing to do? What could be said between us save explanations that explained nothing, excuses, perhaps apologies? But I finally opened one which proved to have followed the previous one which I had read. Carl had waited, it appeared, until I should have had time to reply had I done this at once, to his first letter. This letter demanded why I had not done so, why I kept him thus in suspense. Was it a crime for two people to love each other? etc.

The other two were more or less in the same vein. They left me colder than I had anticipated. They did not seem written by the Carl I had known, rather by some stranger. Only here and there a phrase seemed such as he might have written. I was none the less wretchedly unhappy. I longed for the Carl whom I loved, and who had, as I had believed, loved me truly,

with nothing in our love to make me blush for it. These words of blind, headlong passion frightened, shocked me, even as his kisses that last evening had frightened me. And why reproaches? Was it not his own fault that we were estranged? Why did he not prove to me that his love was honorable?

Even although the thought of putting him forever out of my life seemed almost unendurable, summoning my pride, I finally wrote a few lines, telling him that I was in Berlin to fill engagements upon which my future depended; that I could not and would not be harassed, unnerved by his mad reproaches. I, as he well knew, had done nothing to deserve them, while he, on the contrary, had shown himself unworthy of the confidence I had placed in him. Since he had evidently misunderstood me, I requested him not to write me again in Berlin, warning him that I should not open any future letters.

If I secretly hoped that during the ten days that I should still be in Berlin he would realize that I could be won in but a single manner; would come to me upon my return to Vienna, and imploring my pardon, beg me to be his wife, it must have been because I was by nature sanguine, and it was long before I ceased to expect matters invariably to turn out as I hoped and wished. The possibility, indeed the probability that everything was and must be at an end between Carl and me I still refused to face. It had been a terrible shock to me to discover that he had even for one moment thought that I could be lightly won, but I would forgive him, if once he were convinced of his mistake

and made amends, more easily than I could bear to give him up.

Carl wrote no more. I threw myself into my work, and buoyed up by that faint, unreasonable hope that I have mentioned, I was fairly content.

"Rigoletto" was such a tremendous success that it could have been sung to a crowded theater for all of the five performances, but as "Il Barbiere" had been advertised, we sang it twice. Two additional performances were offered me, but my Vienna contract made it impossible for me to accept. After I left, Bordoni appeared again as *Rigoletto,* with the regular soprano of the theater as *Gilda.* Afterwards he told me that the lady was very fat, with what he described as the vocal agility of a cow.

With all my work, I found time to study the waltz song which the Viennese conductor had recommended to me, and also several songs in German, for which I found a good coach. I reserved rooms in a hotel in quite a different section of Vienna from that of my former residence. I meant to postpone a meeting with Carl for as long as possible, if indeed he had not already given me up. I left Berlin by a night train, immediately after my last appearance at the Opera, and arrived in Vienna the following evening.

CHAPTER XI

PRIMA DONNA OR WOMAN?

AN orchestral rehearsal of "The Huguenots," in which I was first to be heard, was called for the following morning, and as I was leaving my hotel, I met Waldberger. He shook hands cordially, reminded me of his promise to advise me, as he put it, on the waltz song, and made an appointment for me to come to his house on the afternoon after my first appearance at the Opera.

Of Carl I heard and saw nothing that day, nor before my first appearance. But after my big scene in the second act, when artists, newspaper men, and others had come to my dressing-room to congratulate me, and while they were all laughing and talking at once, suddenly I heard a well-known voice behind me, a voice which despite all my belief in my acquired control, made my heart beat madly. Carl made some conventional speech for the benefit of the others, then added in a tone so low that none but myself could hear:

"When am I to see you?"

I shook my head.

"To-morrow morning?" insistently.

Again I shook my head.

"You will lunch with me then?"

I hesitated, then turning slightly from the others, I remarked in an equally low tone:

"I am engaged all day."

He flushed, bit his lip, for a moment I dreaded what he might say before the others. Perhaps it would be best to see him once, and for the last time. I knew him well enough to be sure that if he really had made up his mind it would not be easy to avoid him, so I added:

"I cannot think that we have anything to say to each other, but if you choose to come to my hotel tomorrow evening, I will see you."

Then I deliberately turned away, and addressed myself to an elderly critic who had been talking to me when Carl interrupted. I was conscious that he left the room at once, and also that several persons glanced curiously at me. Just then, however, Waldberger came in, and congratulated me heartily, then came the signal for the next act, and I was alone.

The next afternoon I went to Waldberger's, met his wife, a well-educated, agreeable woman, who had, she told me, been an opera singer herself, but had retired several years before. "One artist in the family is enough, my child," she remarked, with a jolly laugh. Then I went with Waldberger to the studio, a fine, lofty room.

I had brought the waltz song, but in the music roll had put the Liszt *Lorelei,* and two Schubert songs. We began the waltz song. I was not in good voice, but Waldberger made no comment on that, and gave some excellent suggestions about interpretation. After

I had sung it twice, he suddenly turned from the piano, and asked very kindly:

"What is it, my child? You are not yourself to-day."

I tried to smile, but the sympathy in his tone almost unnerved me.

"Is it the excitement of yesterday evening?"

At this I shook my head, and told him that I had not slept well. He asked if I wished to wait until another time to sing longer, but I had no wish to lose this opportunity. He picked up the music roll, and glanced at the songs.

"Mm! *Die Lorelei,*" he murmured. "But these must be sung in German, *mein Kind.* It is impossible to sing them in any other language."

"I have studied the German words," I murmured.

"Let me hear," he urged, and placed the Liszt song on the piano rack.

Inspired by his beautiful accompaniment, I sang the song better than I had believed possible. When I finished, he pronounced approvingly:

"That should suit you well. Your German is not at all bad. With a little practice it would be very good."

He made some suggestions, and we went over the Schubert songs in the same manner. He knew and approved of the coach whom I had engaged, gave me the names of other songs, and to my delight, offered to hear these again, and made an appointment.

Before he would allow me to leave, I must have coffee with himself and his wife. She brought the tray into the studio herself, and proudly informed me that the little cakes were made by her. We had a pleasant hour together; they were simple and unaffected in

their home. Waldberger told her that the next time I came she must hear me sing in German, and time passed so rapidly that I was quite surprised at the hour when I arrived at my hotel.

Singing, the little diversion, enabled me to fall asleep, and it was seven o'clock when Francine called me.

I dressed, and had something to eat in my rooms. Eight o'clock, half past, struck, when I suddenly remembered that I had not mentioned to Carl my hotel. Even as I wondered if he would find me, there was a knock, and barely waiting for my "Come in," he stood before me.

I had chosen my seat with care. Directly in front of me was a table, and there was no other chair very close to mine. But for the moment Carl made no move to seat himself, or even to take my hand, which involuntarily I half offered, then let drop at my side. He threw his cap and gloves down, then as greeting remarked sternly:

"Well, are you satisfied? Have you tortured me sufficiently?"

I gazed at him. He had indeed changed during these weeks; his face was thinner, older, there was a strange look in his eyes. But his cold manner and his first words helped me to be calm. Bitterly I resented his blaming me for what was his own fault, solely his fault, I assured myself. It was therefore in almost an indifferent manner that I replied:

"I have had no wish to 'torture' you, Carl. It seems to me that you have brought your suffering on yourself."

"How then?" he cried furiously. "Are you a woman or a fiend? You lead me on, you accept my attentions, give me every reason to believe that you love me, then turn from me as ruthlessly as though you hated me. What does it mean? What do you want?"

For the moment there was nothing that I could say.

"Deny that you love me if you can," he continued, his voice shaking, whether with anger or other emotion I was too unnerved to judge. As I still said nothing, his voice softened. "Luisa, why do you treat me so? It is not like you; I could not have believed that you were so cruel. I love you with all my heart. *Gott!* what these days of separation have been to me! And you would not write, save one cruel little note. Tell me that you love me, that you have but been pleasing yourself by testing me, or that there was some wretched misunderstanding, that you are my own dear love."

I found my voice, although it was harsh and unnatural.

"Captain von Zolter," I said firmly, rising as though to show that our interview was at an end, "I want no love that is not honorable."

"Honorable?" he echoed, uncomprehending.

"You know perfectly well what you are offering me?" I murmured, not looking at him.

He started, stared at me a moment, apparently amazed, then cried:

"Good Heavens! Is it possible that you expected me to marry you?"

Set down in black and white, the words seem a deadly insult, and yet as he spoke them, they gave a different impression, one of such bewildered amaze-

ment that I first wondered, instead of resenting. But not for long. Drawing myself up proudly, I demanded haughtily:

"Why should I expect anything else, when once you have declared that you love me?"

His face still wore that amazed expression.

"But, Luisa, surely you understand—you must know that that is impossible, that—that—" he began hesitatingly, and a sudden suspicion flashed through my mind.

"Do you mean that you are already married?"

"*Gott im Himmel,* no!" he burst out so decidedly that I could not doubt his sincerity. Then, with a despairing gesture, he began speaking rapidly.

"Luisa, how is it possible that you do not know that a marriage between us is out of the question?" He gave me no time to reply, but continued: "I am an officer in the army; to marry anyone whomsoever, I must have the consent of the Emperor, first of all, to say nothing of my family. That consent is never given when a man of my rank is in question, unless the lady whom I wish to marry is *hoffähig,* is of suitable rank, in short, can be presented at court, and no one connected with the stage can be that. There are other conditions, other requirements, but the one fact alone that you are an opera singer would be enough. I never dreamed for one moment that you did not know this. You have lived in Europe for years, surely —I thought of course that you understood——"

"In short," I interrupted furiously, "you have from the first, even there in Trieste, misunderstood what I

supposed was our friendship, misjudged me, believed me to be——"

"I defy you to say that I ever by word or action gave you to believe in Trieste that I looked upon our relations as other than friendly. I did not make love to you there, and you know it."

"No, you did not, but merely because you felt no inclination at that time to do so," I replied, with no lessening of my wrath. "I thought you understood me, that you respected me, even although I knew no European girl could have gone about with you as I did. But you knew that I had been differently brought up, I believed you realized this, but evidently—" I choked, then steadying my voice, resumed: "And so all the time you believed that I was fair game, had you only chosen to pursue me—that—that— Did you perchance believe that I had lovers even then?"

"I did not give much thought to the matter then," he replied slowly. "I saw very plainly that I did not appeal to you in that manner, and I enjoyed our 'friendship' as you call it; especially since it was the first I had ever had with a woman of the stage, almost I might say with any woman."

"But it would not have surprised you to learn that I had some one, some—'protector' in another city?" I persisted, strangely anxious to learn the very worst he had thought.

He hesitated, then slowly answered:

"No, I cannot say that it would have surprised me."

"And you still believe that?" I gasped.

He stared at me oddly, as though he would read my very soul for a moment, then:

"Do you mean to say that you never have?" he cried incredulously.

I tried to make some indignant reply, but my strength failed me, and sinking down in my chair, I buried my face in my arms on the table before me, and wished that I were dead. There was utter silence for a moment, then suddenly before I could move, his arms were around me.

"What is the use of this, Luisa? I will believe whatever you tell me, although it can make no difference in my love. I loved you the moment I saw you come on the stage that first night you sang here, I have loved you more and more every day, until now there is not a tiny bit of my heart that is not yours. I adore you. Why erect a barrier between us? Why try to drive me from you? You know you love me, let us be happy—"

I struggled to free myself from his arms, but in vain. On and on he talked, but I hardly heeded his words, his voice now a low murmur; he kissed me and I did not resist, but let him hold me in his arms, while I lay back inert, almost as though consciousness were leaving me. Suddenly my strength returned. Freeing myself desperately, I rose and faced him bravely.

"This is useless, Carl. It is killing me. I cannot and will not listen to you longer. Go! Forget me, as I hope I may forget you. We must never see each other again."

"You will sacrifice me, yourself, our happiness, everything to your senseless scruples?" he cried despairingly.

"I will never accept your love under such conditions,"

I cried resolutely. "It is an insult, I want none of it."

"You have no right to call my love an insult," he cried angrily.

"Suppose your sister were to be offered such love?" I cried, no less angrily.

"We will leave my sister out of the discussion," suddenly his voice was cold and arrogant.

At last my pride was fully roused.

"And why?" I cried, and this time if my voice shook it was with rage. "I may be mistaken, but I fancy the Della Rocca family of Romagna is as old as the von Zolters, and were one of my ancestors to have learned of such an insult offered to one of his name, that he would have known how to avenge it quite as satisfactorily as any of your own." I paused for lack of breath, but Carl stared at me with a new expression.

"Do you mean to say that your family name is really Della Rocca? That you really belong to the Romagna family of that name?" he asked amazedly.

"Do you think then that I am lying?" I cried bitterly, but he took no notice of my tone.

"I supposed it was a stage name, of course. I never dreamed—why, a Della Rocca was ambassador to Vienna in the seventeenth century, and another——"

"Even so, esteemed sir," I interrupted, furiously, "and another was a very famous general, who, if I am not greatly mistaken, fought against your Austrian armies very successfully, and even took prisoner, and held as hostage, one of the most distinguished of the Austrian generals, a cousin of the then Emperor himself." (Not in vain had my grandfather told me stories of his family in my childhood days.) "I dare-

say he was quite willing to dine with his captor, and did not consider that he was condescending either."

But Carl still did not seem to notice my wrath; he was apparently meditating deeply. Suddenly he seized my hands.

"Do you not see, do you not realize that that may make a difference?" he cried. "I do not know; I dare not be too hopeful, for the fact remains that you are on the stage, but if you were to leave it at once, it might—if I were to go to the Emperor himself—if my father would— Luisa, I shall see what can be done. I must try first to get leave of absence; my father is in the country, I am not sure where at the moment. I may be gone a week—but you shall hear from me as soon as possible, I will come to you—and meanwhile I love you, I love you, do you hear? And I will not give you up," and with another embrace, he caught up his cap and gloves, and dashed from the room almost before I could have replied had I tried.

I sank back into my chair, trying vainly to be calm. What did he mean? What was he about to do? I could not understand. I told myself that in any case it did not matter, since assuredly I would never willingly see him again. Of course not! He had misjudged me, misunderstood, insulted me far too deeply for me ever to forgive him. But none the less, angry, hurt, humiliated as I felt myself to be, and justly, too, a spark of hope that perhaps things might still turn out well, that perhaps I might yet be happy, would spring up in my heart again and again, no matter how my reason and my pride tried to extinguish it. Carl had misunderstood me terribly, my cheeks burned at the

mere recollection, but my heart pleaded in excuse his belief that I must have known of the barriers which convention, tradition, military regulations, etiquette, all had placed between us, but of which in my ignorance I had never dreamed. And he loved me, loved me! Had he not sworn that he would not give me up? And now that my position was clear, now that he understood, he would move Heaven and earth to accomplish his purpose. In spite of myself, I was happier than since that last night in Vienna before I left for Berlin.

The next day passed with no word from Carl. Although I had hardly expected any, still I was restless, nervous, and found it hard to settle down to work, but a rehearsal of *Lucia* occupied most of the afternoon. When I returned from the theatre, I found a note from Frau Waldberger inviting me to supper the following evening.

"We know that you are singing the next evening," she wrote, "but can you not come to us even if you leave early?"

I decided to accept. Heaven knew that I needed to be taken out of myself.

It was a jolly and unconventional party that I found assembled when I arrived, almost the last one, yet not the kind of unconventionality that had so disgusted me at the studio party to which Carl had taken me on New Year's Eve. Here were eminently respectable looking married couples, several of the men members of the orchestra with whom I had sung under Waldberger's baton; there were a novelist, a painter, several artists from the opera, including the baritone who had sung with me at the court concert, and if there were

those whose standards of morals were not mine, there were no indications of this in their behavior. Almost everyone seemed well acquainted with all the rest. I regretted that I could not speak German, for although out of politeness to me and a young Russian girl, a pianist, studying with Leschetizky, of whom I heard much, the conversation was carried on partly in French, yet, as was but natural, they were apt to relapse into their native tongue, and almost all were Austrians or Germans.

We were quite merry at supper. Later, when we went into the studio, a group gathered about the piano, quite naturally. They were deep in a discussion of music, when suddenly a familiar strain fell on my ears, the Prologue from Leoncavallo's "I Pagliacci." None of them had heard it, and all were interested to learn that I had heard the original production at La Scala the year before.

"Do you sing any of *Nedda's* music?" asked Waldberger, and when I replied that I had studied the *Bird Song,* although I had never sung it in public, nothing would do but I must try it for them. Waldberger began the difficult accompaniment, playing it wonderfully, as he did everything. He made a piano accompaniment seem almost orchestral. When I finished singing there were congratulations, seemingly sincere, from all present. Then Waldberger insisted that I sing a German song. I tried to beg off, but finally yielded, and sang Schumann's *Mondnacht.* They were kind enough to pronounce my German quite good. I noticed Waldberger and two other men talking together, and finally they beckoned to me.

"When does your engagement here end, Fräulein?" asked an elderly man, with whom I had not spoken before.

I told them.

"But you are engaged for the entire season at the Opera after that, are you not?" someone asked.

I stared in surprise.

"Not to my knowledge."

I noticed odd looks exchanged between my questioner and another man, but thought little of it. Waldberger then asked me if I could sing at a concert on the day following my last arranged appearance. It was a big affair, organized for the benefit of a prominent charity. There would be no remuneration; all were giving their services, but the committee, of which he was a member, would be grateful; I was a newcomer, and would be a great attraction.

I was more than willing, feeling it but a slight return to Waldberger for his kindness to me, and it was decided that I sing the *Bird Song*. Soon afterwards I went home.

The next morning early came a short note from Carl.

"My angel," it ran. "With great difficulty, I have secured leave, and am now on my way to find my father. I do not know his exact whereabouts, as he left on business which would necessitate some traveling about, but I cannot wait for him to return, so shall try to overtake him somewhere on the journey. It is useless to write, I must talk with him. I will write you as soon as I have news.

"Yours until death,

"Carl."

There was little in this note to make my spirits soar, but I was so happy all day that Francine seemed astonished.

That evening, as I was dressing for *Lucia,* a sudden thought did startle me. My career! Would I really be willing to give it up? Could I content myself with a conventional life, after all these years? After all my work, my ambitions, successes, which yet were to have been but stepping-stones to far greater triumphs? This thought sobered me for a moment, but I put it from me, and continued my arpeggios to warm up my voice.

Excitement, the relaxing of the strain under which for weeks I had been living, happiness—I was still happy—all contributed to put me in excellent voice. I do not believe that I ever sang better than that night. I was applauded frantically. There was that moment of hush after the Mad Scene, then, as the orchestra stopped, that storm of applause which so exhilarates an artist.

A party in a large box near the stage seemed hardly able to turn their eyes from me, but stared so persistently through opera glasses and *lorgnons* that my attention was attracted. As I came out again and again after the Mad Scene to bow, they seemed discussing me with more than ordinary interest. I fancied that I recognized the girl whom I had seen with Carl in Buda Pesth, on the night of my début there. I have unusually keen eyesight, and can recognize people at quite a distance from the stage. This has often amused my *confrères,* some of whom can barely distinguish any faces behind the first row of the parquet.

I sang my third performance of *La Traviata.* Still there was no word from Carl. On the morning of that performance, I received a letter from Fano. He had had an offer for me of twelve performances at Santiago, Chile, at five thousand francs a performance, a larger amount than I had yet received, and traveling expenses there and return paid. I looked the place up on a map. Even compared to Buenos Aires, it seemed at the other end of the world. Fano had not closed the contract, had other offers, but this was by far the best financially.

Ordinarily, such a letter, even arriving on a day when I was singing, would have been answered at once, if only with a telegram. I was young enough in my career to fear losing a good engagement by not accepting at once; had not yet learned to add to my importance by keeping managers waiting. But now I could make no plans. Time enough for that when I heard from Carl.

The following day passed; no word. It was a week since he left. Late the next afternoon there came a knock, the door opened, and Carl came in. He had failed. I knew before he spoke. He came and gazed into my eyes for a moment in silence, then:

"It is useless, Luisa. My father will never give his consent."

For a moment I said not a word. I was trying to realize that my happiness was at an end. I had hardly realized before how I had hoped. Then I noticed how tired and worn Carl looked. I sat down, and motioned him to do the same, then waited until dully, not at

all in his usual manner, he began speaking, staring in front of him.

"I had two long interviews with him. I followed him to three places, always arriving just after he had left, but at last I overtook him. I said everything that I could; I urged every possible plea for his consent, in vain. Finally he forbade me to mention the subject again."

I glanced at him curiously. Even now it was almost impossible for me, an American, to consider a parent's refusal under such circumstances as an insurmountable barrier to a man's marriage. I tried not to be irritated, impatient, and waited. Carl was silent for a few minutes, then:

"Unfortunately I know my father well enough to realize that he will never change," he resumed, still in that apathetic voice.

Again I waited, then as he did not speak, asked as calmly as possible:

"Is his consent then indispensable?" And as he stared at me in astonishment, I continued a bit impatiently: "You must make allowances for my ignorance of your laws and conventions. You spoke of the Emperor's consent as necessary, but did not say that your father——"

"My dearest girl, of what use would it be now for me to ask His Majesty's consent since my father refuses his own?" he interrupted. Then apparently seeing my bewilderment, he explained patiently: "You evidently do not know that my father not only occupies a prominent position at court, but is a member of the Emperor's most intimate circle as well. I think I may

say that there is no one with whom His Majesty is on closer terms of friendship, so far as that word may ever apply to the relations of sovereign and subject. If my father had consented, it is possible, although not certain, that his influence and my personal appeal might have induced the Emperor to consent to our marriage; if not immediately, at least after you had retired from the stage, and your stage life had become a thing of the past. Once your descent from the old family of Della Rocca were fully established, there could be no objection from the point of birth. But let my father throw his influence with the Emperor against me, can you not see that it is useless for me to attempt to obtain an interview?"

"What is your father's objection to me? He knows nothing of me."

"*Gott im Himmel!* What is the use of going into that now?" he cried. "Enough that he does object. Do you suppose that I have not done everything in my power to win him over?"

I persisted.

"Is it only because I am an opera singer?"

"That first and foremost," was the reluctant answer, "but in addition you are a foreigner, and when all is said an American after all. He hates Americans. He wishes me to marry one of our own set—in short, there is someone else who——"

"Oh!" I interrupted.

"I shall never marry her, never!" he burst out. "Not if I live to be a hundred! But her father is one of my father's oldest friends, there are property reasons—oh, if only my brother had lived."

"Your brother?" I repeated wonderingly.

"When we met in Trieste I was a younger son; surely you remember hearing me speak of my older brother?"

I did not, but I made no reply, and after a moment he resumed:

"He was killed in a hunting accident the very summer after we met."

"When I became the heir my allowance was greatly increased, my father used his influence to have me transferred and stationed here, that I might assist him in looking after our estates, might learn to take the place which at his death will be mine. While my brother lived he, of course, was the heir, I the younger son, with a career to make in the army. Do you see?"

I did begin to see what a difference that one death had made. I also began to understand something of the change I had noticed in Carl from our first meeting again. I said nothing of this, merely murmured assent.

"Very well; I am the heir, the name is an old one, he wishes, he insists that I marry someone whom he considers in every way a suitable wife——"

"I see," I interrupted, perhaps bitterly. Heaven knows I felt bitterly then towards Carl, his father, the entire Austrian aristocracy, with their narrow prejudices, as I at all events styled them. Carl gave me a keen glance, and apparently divined my thoughts, at least in part, for he continued quickly:

"No, I do not believe that you do see. You think that I might defy my father, eh?"

"I have not said so," I replied proudly.

"But you have thought it. In your country, you are thinking, a man does not give up so easily the

woman he loves. Very well. Let me explain to you, Luisa, that while my father cannot entirely disinherit me—the estates must come to me at his death, for I am his only son—he can, and swore that he would if I disobeyed him, cut off my allowance. I should of course be obliged to resign from the army, and should have an income of exactly two thousand florins a year of which he could not deprive me, since it was left me by an aunt. Two thousand florins! I have often spent that in a single week. Do you begin to understand now?"

"I understand perfectly," I replied dully, "that there is nothing for us to do but say good-by."

At that Carl's entire manner changed. He began speaking rapidly, urgently, scarcely giving me a chance to interrupt him. The burden of his impassioned speech was the same argument repeated over and over again, with slight variations, as though by repetition he hoped to overcome my opposition. Why need we be separated? Why could we not live for each other and our love? Why should silly conventions interfere with our happiness? He loved me and me only, he would never cease to love me, etc., etc. He brushed aside my objections almost before I finished making them, holding my hands tightly in his own, trying to look into my eyes, while he defied me to tell him that I did not love him.

That indeed I could not do, but there were plenty of arguments that I could and did urge. As for the moral side, he refused positively to admit that it had any bearing upon the subject.

"You are absolutely free, Luisa," was one of his

pleas. "You have not a living soul who can be wounded or injured by whatever you decide to do. You are wholly independent; why then will you not make use of your independence, and let us be happy? Do you fancy that you are the only woman who has taken her happiness in her own hands, has decided her life for herself?"

He named a number of women, actresses, writers, professional women in various walks of life who, as he put it, had had the courage to lead their own lives, independent of worldly conventions. As if he perceived that, although an opera singer myself, I was not grealty influenced by accounts of what women in my profession had done or might do, he then alluded to women of the aristocracy, women even in court circles. Did I not know that Mme. So-and-So, the Countess X., or the Baroness Y., were known to have lovers—he even named these to me—and did that make any difference in their positions? Why then was I so Puritanical, so rigid?

Wearily I sought other arguments that might appeal to him; his father's wrath, which in my ignorance I fancied would none the less be visited upon him if he did not give me up entirely. He undeceived me. So long as he did not marry me, so long as he gave his word that he would not do so, apparently he was free to live with me as long as he chose, with no diminution of his income or privileges. There was no urgency for the marriage which his father wished. The lady was very young. In any case, what need the mere fact of his marriage matter? He loved only me, and should never pretend otherwise.

His arguments left me cold, horrified, wounded me, but it was quite otherwise when he began pleading, urging his love, asking me if I could really have the heart to separate us, to drive him to desperation. All this while he clasped me in his arms, despite my struggles, and kissed me again and again.

I was very weary, my powers of resistance seemed for the time numbed, when suddenly there came a knock at the door. Carl sprang up with a muttered oath, and after a moment's pause to recover my composure as well as possible, I opened the door. Outside stood Francine and a woman with a large box. I stared at them in bewilderment.

"Mademoiselle, it is the costume from the theatre," Francine explained. "Mademoiselle remembers?"

I did remember then. I had torn the costume which I wore in "La Traviata" badly on leaving the stage after my first appearance in that opera, necessitating extensive repairs. I was to sing the opera the following evening, and this woman had brought the dress for me to try on.

I sent her into my bedroom with Francine, and turning to Carl, explained briefly that I must send him away. He vowed that he must return, but by this time I had sufficiently come to my senses to remind him that I was singing the following evening, my last appearance at the Opera. I told him that I could not see him again until after that. He protested, but I was firm, and when I cried out wildly that undoubtedly it would be best for us never to see each other again, I think he was afraid of what his persistence might drive

me to. At all events, he hesitated, but finally acquiesced, and cried:

"I leave it to your own heart, Luisa. If you will only follow its dictates, I know that we shall be happy. I shall see you Monday morning." Then he kissed me until my resistance seemed melting, and when he left the room I almost called him back.

Almost, but I did not. I went through my fitting in a daze; everything was right, quite right with the costume, I assured the woman. I only wanted to be rid of her, and alone with my thoughts. It was Francine who after one glance at me objected, sternly criticized. This seam must be taken in, that slope was not perfect, and she stood over the woman until the changes were made. It was Francine who sternly ignored my remark that I was not hungry, and would not dine. She ordered what she thought best, eyed me until I had eaten what she bade me, and only when she had made me comfortable in a loose dressing-gown, with my hair in a long braid down my back, did she leave me with the admonishment to remember that I must sing well to-morrow evening.

At last I was alone. Her final words rang in my ears. I "must sing well to-morrow evening." I must please the public whose servant I was. Carl had spoken of my freedom. I laughed bitterly. In what did it consist, this freedom? Yes, it was true that I might break most of the Ten Commandments, might trample under foot many of the laws of society if I chose, and still, as long as I kept my voice, my power to please the public, to be a popular opera singer, I was also free to have proposals made to me that had I

remained in the sphere in which I was born I probably need never have heard. I smiled bitterly as I stared at myself in the mirror, as though to see what kind of woman this was to whom the man she loved thus lightly offered infamy. My heart was sore. Carl's arguments seemed specious, illogical now that he was no longer with me. I was still too much the daughter of a Republic to treat them as worthy of regard. Even the threat to cut off his allowance did not impress me as it would probably have impressed a European woman. His father would reduce him to his two thousand florins. How many of our wealthiest men had begun life with no such assured income? Why could not Carl earn money in some way as other men did? Vaguely I realized that there were difficulties in such a path for him, but I did not actually grasp the virtual impossibility of it for a man not only of Carl's birth, but of his bringing-up, his education, his whole environment.

Finally the opera singer came into the foreground, the mere woman retired temporarily into the background. With all my strength I exerted my will to put everything out of my mind for the present as something to be thought out, decided later. For the present I must think of nothing but the morrow, the success I must and would have. With practice this is more possible than may be supposed. At all events, by persistently turning my thoughts in one direction and one only, I partially succeeded in recovering my poise, and even slept fairly well that night. I was not in good voice the next evening, but as I carefully refrained from the slightest intimation of the fact to anyone, I

doubt if many in the audience realized it. I was applauded as heartily as ever, and I smiled and bowed my thanks as though I had not a care in the world.

Only at one time was there danger of a mishap. We had reached the scene where *Alfredo's* father comes to plead with *Violetta* to give up his son. Suddenly as I listened to the plea from the baritone, preserving the proper air of respectful attention, I was struck by a certain resemblance to what might lie before me. Did I propose to put myself in the position of a *Violetta,* and possibly live to see the day when Carl's father might even be moved to make a similar plea to me? I forgot myself, I shivered, almost missed my cue. My emotion quite fitted in with the scene. It was even effective for *Violetta* to appear so overcome with emotion that her voice shook, but I was frightened, and pulled myself together determinedly. Once more I was *Violetta,* only *Violetta;* Luisa Della Rocca did not exist, had no slightest part in the business of the moment.

I had the success I wished, was recalled many times after the final curtain, complimented by the director, who assured me that this was not good-by, but *"Auf Wiedersehen,"* as he shook hands with me before I left the theatre. He said this in a confident manner which again slightly surprised me, for I had heard nothing as yet of another engagement. But when I was alone in my room that night it was impossible longer to forget my own problem.

As I tossed restlessly, I at one moment resolved to dispatch a note as soon as morning came bidding Carl farewell, refusing to see him again. Then my heart

pleaded for just one more meeting. I could not let him go out of my life forever without one more interview. I would be calm, dignified, resolute, but see him again I must, and so the mental conflict went on and on until from sheer exhaustion I dozed.

He came the next morning and repeated all his arguments of the other day. He was now tender, pleading, now raging at my "insane prejudices," my "ridiculous conventionality." Again he refused even to consider the situation from the viewpoint of morality. He had an additional argument which he had apparently regarded as probably convincing to me. I worshiped appearances, that was evident. Very well, appearances should be strictly preserved. He was able to assure me positively that he had but to give the word, to say that I would sign it, and a contract for not only the following season, but for five years would be sent me from the Opera, and he supposed that "even I" would not quarrel over the salary attached, since money need not concern me. I suppose I looked my surprise, although I was really thinking that this must be the explanation of the hint that I had heard at Waldberger's, of the director's words the evening before, for he continued:

"Oh, some influence I have. Does that surprise you so much? It is not the first time that you have been benefited by it."

"What can you mean?" I wondered, too astonished as yet to be indignant.

He laughed, although not mirthfully.

"My ingenuous Luisa, did you never suspect why you were bidden to sing at court last winter?"

"You mean that you——?"

"I mean that I used my influence. My name is sufficiently well known even aside from my father to have weight in some quarters. They think probably that by pleasing the son they may be no losers. You were angry with me. I hoped that I might make my peace with you in that way——"

"I never dreamed that you had anything to do with it," I cried.

"Did it not seem odd that you, a stranger, a newcomer, were asked to sing at a concert where any of our singers would consider it an honor to appear?" he asked, evidently amused.

I shook my head.

"Such is none the less the case," he continued. "But enough of that. Let it merely help to convince you that there are steps upward in your career, if that is so important to you, to which I can help you. Not I alone, I make no such pretensions, but through my friends, my connections. Has that no weight with you?"

Proudly I told him that I could make my own way even as I already had.

"You think so now because you are young, pretty, your voice is fresh, and you have been, if indeed you owe your success to no one but yourself, extremely fortunate. But do you think it will always be the same? Have not even you known of opportunities that you might have had were you less—shall we say prudish?"

My thoughts flew to *Maestro* Benadetti, my face changed and he saw it. He noticed every slightest change in my expression.

"You have! You have!" he cried triumphantly. "Can you not then understand that the day may come when you will need a protector? With me at your side, Luisa, do you not realize that life may be easier for you?"

He had struck the wrong note. The recollection of Benadetti made me furious; all the more so perhaps since he, Carl, was connected with that episode in a manner of which he knew nothing. Proudly I informed him that if I could not succeed through my own ability, my own efforts, I would retire from the stage.

"I am no beggar," I cried. "I have my own old home to return to, my own income. I should not starve, I assure you."

He looked at me curiously.

"You are a creature of contradictions to me, Luisa. Why did you ever go on the stage? You do not belong there."

I would not hear my profession defamed. If he quoted names I quoted others to prove my contention that a woman could succeed without the kind of aid he offered. At some of the names he laughed outright, to others he merely listened politely, saying nothing. Then he dismissed the subject. After all, it did not concern us. The only important fact was that we loved each other, belonged to each other, etc. But my mood had changed.

What might have been the outcome had it not been for his ill-advised remarks I do not know. I hope that in any case it would have been the same. The actual result was that I informed him in a manner whose finality even he seemed no longer to doubt, that

it was useless for us to argue longer. Since I could not be his wife we must part now and forever. I could not, I would not see him again. He must spare me the repetition of such a scene which could but harrow us both, and avail nothing. My decision was made, I tearfully though firmly insisted. He argued for a time, then in a burst of wrath declared that he would indeed say no more. I was a thoroughly heartless woman whom he should try to forget as soon as possible, and he rushed from the room without a word of real farewell.

So that was the end! I should never see him again. Well, I ought to be content, since that was what I had decided to be the only ending to our love possible under the circumstances. But I shed bitter tears for what might have been.

An odd incident occurred that very day.

I had been invited by one of the women whom I had met at the Waldbergers' supper to a small, informal *Kaffeeklatsch* at her home that afternoon, and had accepted less because I was greatly attracted to her, for she was ordinary enough, than because her husband was music critic on one of the leading papers of Vienna, and it would be extremely foolish not to do so. Besides I had no engagement, was not singing until the following evening.

I dried my tears, obliterated their traces as well as possible, made a careful toilet and went. There were perhaps a dozen women there, and I was bored with their conversation, consisting chiefly of personalities concerning people whose very names were unknown to me. At last something attracted my attention.

"Oh, yes, poor Lieutenant von Brüch! His position is indeed pitiful. You know everyone says that he was a brilliant young officer, and that his superiors counted on his distinguishing himself. It is very sad."

"What is it? What has happened? Anything new?" asked the others eagerly.

"Yes. Have you not heard?" chimed in another. "Poor Mimi Weisbach died yesterday; heart disease, I believe. She was taken ill in the theatre, and died before she reached home. It is really very pathetic."

"But what had the Lieutenant's position, and the fact that he was a brilliant young officer to do with that?" I asked idly, expecting to hear the usual tale of a *liaison*. I hardly knew why I asked, since such stories did not really interest me.

"Ah, you do not know of course, my dear, being a stranger here," replied my hostess indulgently. "You see, he fell in love with her, and in spite of all that his family and friends could say and do, insisted upon marrying her, for she was a good girl, or so they say. Of course he had to resign from the army. Naturally! And he had nothing, no income at all, for his father cut off his allowance at once. His mother, poor soul, they say never got over the blow. At all events, she died not long afterwards. Most of his old friends cut him."

"What did they live on then?" I asked curiously.

"Oh, my dear, Mimi always had a good salary. She is, or was, poor child, quite a popular singer in operetta, and as her father is manager of a small theater she always had an engagement. But they spent every *heller* of her salary, were always in debt besides,

and what will become of the poor Lieutenant now I really do not see."

"Can he not earn his living?" I asked rather contemptuously.

The group of women exclaimed:

"My dear! A von Brüch!"

"Impossible! Out of the question!"

"What could he do?" cried a third.

"There is nothing left for him but to marry a rich girl, the daughter of some *parvenu,* who for the sake of his name would accept him. In that case doubtless his family would be reconciled, or at all events consent to receive them."

The others all agreed that that was the only possible solution of the problem, although the unfortunate Mimi was not yet in her grave.

I went home disgusted, yet realizing against my will that there evidently was more in these class prejudices and restrictions than I, aristocrat in my own country as I considered myself, had been willing to admit. None of these women seemed to find anything out of the way in this state of affairs, but cheerfully agreed that the young husband who had defied his class must now try to find an heiress to support him, since Mimi was no longer alive to do so. I felt the utmost contempt for the system, yet could not but understand that in this country it appeared to be rigid, unalterable.

The following morning I had a letter from Fano, asking why I had not answered about the South American contract, and urging me to telegraph him at once. Still I waited, in no mood to make decisions.

The charity concert was a brilliant affair, given

under the auspices of some of Vienna's most prominent people. I wore a becoming gown, and after a moment of hesitation, donned the Emperor's brooch half defiantly, now that I knew why it had been given me.

The aria went well, wonderfully well. I could see Waldberger smiling approval. As a rule, I do not try to pick out persons in an audience. On the operatic stage I am too absorbed in the action, and at concerts I do not wish to bring them too near. But as I stood waiting this evening, during the orchestral prelude, my attention was attracted by a group sitting near the front of the audience. It consisted of a distinguished, arrogant looking elderly woman, two young women, and Carl. All four were gazing intently at me. I looked away at once, glancing about the hall. I determined that I would sing my best, would show them that I really was an artist. Only later, in my dressing-room, did I know myself a fool. What was it to those pepole whether I were a real artist or a mere pretense?

I did sing well. I knew it, and threw myself into my singing. I was brought back many times, and finally Waldberger led me on, and seated himself at the piano. I began the *Mondnacht.*

This was a great surprise to the audience, many of whom knew that I had never sung in German, so now to hear me sing in that language, with a pronunciation which Waldberger had assured me was excellent, made a little ripple of interest pass over the audience. Again I felt the eyes of the little group upon me, but did not glance at them. I tried to appear absorbed in the

beautiful song. When I finished there was hearty applause, and Waldberger was as pleased as I.

During the intermission we spoke of my departure. He asked if it were true that I was returning to the Opera. Again that report! I told him that it had been intimated that I could have a contract, but that the conditions were not acceptable. Waldberger gave me a keen glance, almost as though he understood, but merely expressed his regret that he was not to hear me then, hoped that it would be merely a pleasure postponed, etc.

It was late when I reached home, for there were good-bys to be said. There Francine handed me a note from Carl. It begged me, if I loved him, to postpone my departure for at least one day. He had something most important to say to me, and it would be impossible for him to see me before the following evening. I hesitated, but yielded.

"Francine, I have changed my mind," I told the girl. "I am tired. We will wait until day after to-morrow." I wrote a few lines and gave them to be sent. It was a telegram to Fano, bidding him sign the Santiago contract. Perhaps by putting thousands of miles between us, it might be easier for me to forget Carl, for although I had weakly consented to see him again, I knew now that nothing could shake my resolve. Since I could not be his wife we must part, and the more final our parting, the sooner we should both find peace.

A telegram from Fano next day told me that I must sail from Genoa only a week later. To my delight, Francine agreed to go with me. While she packed, I went for a long walk out into the country, and wan-

dered through woods in all the fresh beauty of their early summer verdure. Trees have always affected me. They seem to a lesser degree than mountains, but similarly, to invite one to cast aside troubles and worries, to assure us that these cannot for long endure.

Carl came, and surprised me as I had not expected to be surprised. Emphatically he informed me that his mind was made up. I would accept his love on one condition only. Very well, so be it. He had waited but to tell me first that he was sending in his resignation from the army. He could not live without me. These last three days had convinced him. We would be happy in spite of everyone, of everything, and he continued in this vein, hardly giving me a chance to speak.

I do not know. Perhaps a week earlier I might have consented to the mad plan. Now the history of the unfortunate Mimi, and her "promising young officer," was fresh in my mind. Gently but firmly I began remonstrating with him, at first in vain. It was useless to argue, he was quite determined, and we would be married at once, was his unvarying reply, while any faint hope on my part that a marriage between us might really be possible with my private income, and what I could reasonably expect to earn on the stage, was ended at once and for all time by his positive assertion:

"My wife cannot remain on the stage. It is out of the question. Doubtless I can find in another country some occupation whereby I can earn enough to support you with what you have."

I grew firmer. I told him that never would I con-

sent to ruin his life, all his prospects, and when he continued to insist that his mind was made up, I urged that to take advantage of a decision made under stress of emotion would be hardly less than criminal on my part.

"You must promise me that you will give up this idea of resigning at once, or breaking irrevocably with all your past mode of life, Carl, and that you will deliberate very carefully before taking such a step," I begged him. "In any case," I added, as a final argument, "there could be no question of an immediate marriage, for I am sailing in a week for South America, to be absent for three months."

"You have agreed to go there now? When you knew, when—" he interrupted wildly.

"Carl, I must consider my future," I replied gently. "You must realize yourself that it would be mad folly for you to rush into something that you might regret all the rest of your life."

"Oh, you do not love me, you have never loved me," he raved. "If you did, you could not argue like a lawyer."

Gradually he grew more reasonable, although breaking out again when I refused to write during my absence. The time would pass quickly, I assured him, lying bravely, and meanwhile he must consider himself absolutely free to decide in the manner that seemed best to him. Nor did I try to conceal from him that I believed that it would be far wiser for us to part now and forever. I only ceased to allude to this when he reproached me until I could bear no more. Reluctantly, protesting violently, he finally agreed to my

conditions with one change. He promised to wait for two months, and during that time to make no attempt to write to me, but longer than that he would not wait.

"You do not realize that my mind is made up," he told me. "I shall not change. I agree merely to satisfy you. You say you are to be gone for three months? Very good. At the end of two months I shall write you, and tell you of the plans I have made for our life together. You will receive my letter before you leave South America, and can then cable me when you will arrive in Europe. Give me your address, and I promise not to try to communicate with you before."

We argued briefly, then I yielded, only too gladly. I had no South American address, but I gave him Fano's in Milan, since letters would be forwarded me from there. It was very late when we parted, for I refused to allow him to come to the station the next morning. I did not wish more gossip of which I now suspected there had been much, nor a public parting. He did not urge it. Once more he held me in his arms, kissing me again and again, while I clung to him as never before. He murmured that this was our last parting, and then we would be together always. I tried to believe that this was the truth, that a future of love and happiness lay before us, but my heart was heavy. I had no hope.

It was not because I actually doubted him, but some words that he had said earlier in the evening recurred again and again, with a chill of foreboding.

"Remember, Luisa," he had said, not reproachfully, rather as one stating a fact, "I am giving up much for

you, and I must insist that you consent to sacrifice your career for me."

Heaven knows at that moment it would have been no sacrifice. It was rather the realization that already he felt the full extent of his own that chilled me. Added, was a strange foreboding that Fate was against me, that my life was not to be spent at his side.

It was in no joyous mood that I left Vienna the next day. I stood for a long time at the window in the corridor outside my compartment, gazing back at the vanishing city, at the outlying country, and wondered when and under what circumstances I should see it again.

CHAPTER XII

THE END OF A DREAM

THE next four days in Milan were filled to their fullest capacity. All day long Francine and I shopped. There was so little time, and all kinds of clothes from midsummer weight for the voyage across the tropics to heavier things for the South American winter must be procured. Francine was greatly excited.

Then there were conferences with Fano. My repertoire was familiar. "Lucia," "La Traviata," "Sonnambula," and "Linda," so fortunately it was not necessary to purchase new costumes, but those for the last two operas, which I had not sung in three years, had to be brought out of storage, and looked over to make sure that they were complete. With all these matters to attend to, at night I was so tired that I slept like the proverbial log.

My second voyage to South America was not a pleasant one. From Genoa almost to Colon it rained, the decks of the steamer were wet, and I spent much time in my cabin. It cleared finally, and became intensely hot.

Colon I thought the dirtiest town I had ever seen, and was only too glad to get into the railway train, and leave it behind. Panama was better, although Francine sniffed at our hotel accommodations, and when I took her with me late in the afternoon for a stroll about the place, her nose was elevated disdainfully, while

she held her skirts high, and ostentatiously picked her way across the streets. The mosquitoes were very annoying, and we were both glad to board the steamer the next day.

Here our accommodations were not luxurious, although the best that the coast steamer afforded, but we were fairly comfortable. The trip was tedious; we stopped at a number of ports, time hung heavy on my hands, and this meant that I had too much leisure to think of my worries. I felt relieved when we finally stepped from the train which had brought us from Valparaiso to Santiago.

Once at our journey's end, everything looked promising. The hotel where rooms had already been reserved for us, subject to my approval, was excellent; even Francine praised it. The theatre was handsome; a committee of citizens who appeared to be responsible for the success of the opera season was ready to do anything in reason to make my stay in their city agreeable. Santiago itself impressed its beauty upon me from the moment of my arrival. I admired greatly its parks and boulevards, especially the wonderful Santa Lucia. I used to climb to the top of the hill almost every day that my engagements permitted, never tiring of the beautiful panorama spread out before me, with the snow-capped mountains rising in the background.

The opera season had already opened, but I was the *prima donna assoluta,* to whose appearance everyone else was subordinated. My performances were the gala evenings, planned to extend through the remaining six weeks of the season. For the first time, I knew

what it was to be fêted; my rooms were continually filled with flowers. After my first appearance as *Lucia* —oh, how tired of that rôle I was becoming!—students from the University took the horses from my carriage, and dragged it to my hotel in time-honored fashion. I was serenaded; a new ice was named after me; quantities of photographs of me were displayed and sold in the shops, and I should have been more than human had I not enjoyed these tributes to my vanity, if not to my artistic worth. I was, if not happy, at least in such a state of perpetual excitement that I hardly had time to think whether I were happy or not.

There were no artists in the company whom I had ever known before save the good-natured basso of my earliest Rimini days, nor were there any of the company to whom I felt especially attracted, although my relations with all were pleasant. I filled my days as full as possible, but there were times when I could not escape from myself, when I gave myself up to brooding over what the future might hold for me. I longed, even although still with that feeling of foreboding of which it seemed impossible to rid myself, for Carl's promised letter, and often bitterly regretted that I had forbidden him to write me meanwhile. I made elaborate calculations with time tables and steamer folders as to the earliest possible day when, the two months having expired, the letter might reach me.

Yet all the time I felt that we were not for each other. If he indeed persisted in what even in the first flush of determination he had styled his sacrifice—and I never denied that he would be sacrificing much for me —and was equally firm in his determination that I

should retire from the stage, was it possible that with his luxurious tastes, which the years since I had first met him in Trieste had greatly developed, was it possible that he could ever content himself to live on the limited income which, with our combined resources, would be ours?

It was useless to say that many couples, especially in certain parts of Europe, lived happily on far less. Useless to remind myself of certain families of my acquaintance who were considered more than comfortably off on no more than that sum. Carl was not used to their manner of life, and I gravely doubted his ability to adapt himself to it. As to his ever earning money, I never for one moment considered it possible now. I did not seriously doubt that I could content myself with a small income, for I had not been always accustomed to a large one. Nor, despite my successes, did stage life now appear bright to me, since it was that which threatened to deprive me of my happiness. No, Carl was my sole concern, for I well knew that if he were not happy I could not be.

I had figured that the letter might arrive three days before I left Santiago. In order to make steamer connections throughout, I was remaining a week after the season closed, and Fano knew the exact date of my sailing from Valparaiso, but the day I had fixed upon for its possible receipt brought me no letter. Nor did the succeeding days, save one from Fano, advising me of certain plans, certain contracts not yet definitely arranged, for the coming winter for me. At last the hour of my departure arrived, and still there was no word from Carl.

I went on board the steamer bound for Panama in a reckless frame of mind. Chance enabled me to render a small service to a man whom I rightly guessed to be a compatriot. I had picked up enough Spanish by this time to speak it fairly well, and he was asking some information of one of the ship's officers who could not understand his attempts in that language. I came to his assistance, and that might have been the end of it save that he chose to make my assistance a pretext for acquaintance.

As a rule I had little to do with other passengers, unless fellow artists, on my various ocean trips, but this time I deliberately engaged in a flirtation, he being nothing loth. We went ashore together at several of the ports where the vessel stopped, we lunched, dined and drove together, as time permitted, and I tried to forget Carl; successfully only for short periods of time, yet I welcomed even these respites.

He was no more serious than I, but seemed to enjoy associating with an opera singer, and also, as he frankly told me, with some one who could speak his own language.

Before we reached Panama, he began trying to persuade me to change my plans for the return voyage to Genoa; instead of sailing for that port from Colon, to go to New York, and thence to Europe by any one of the numerous lines there at my disposal. It was not solely that he might have my society for a longer period, although he declared that it would be "great fun" to show me how New York had changed in the years since I had seen it; he also assured me that I should find the ship accommodations greatly superior,

and the time consumed about the same. I remembered the discomforts of my outward voyage, and also felt a strong desire to return, if only for a few days, to my own country, to which I felt drawn as never before in the years since I had left it. I promised to think the plan over, since he assured me that he could easily arrange everything for me.

I was still undecided when we reached Panama. Before we left the ship it was boarded for the usual formalities, and mail was brought out for the passengers. Among this was a letter for me from Carl. I turned aside from the little group of shipmates with whom I had been standing, watching our entrance into the port, and hurriedly tore it open. It was not very long, but to this day I can quote it from memory.

"My own Luisa,

"I cannot do it. I have thought, I have believed that I could, have tried to take the necessary steps that should set me free to marry you, but I cannot. Custom is too strong for me, my life too deeply rooted in these surroundings, its whole course too established.

"Nor can I, at his age, wreck all my father's hopes for me. This will, I fear, seem criminal weakness to you. You are so strong, so self-reliant. Yet I am also thinking of you, of your reluctance to abandon a career in which, young as you are, you have already won such distinction.

"*Un homme declassé,* as I should be, without money or influence, what should I have to offer you as recompense? That I love you as madly as ever, that if you will but come to me I will devote myself to making you happy, it is needless to say. And that your career

may be made smoother than even you realize I can also promise you. Send me a single word, and I will meet you in whatever part of Europe you name. I beg, I implore you to do this! I adore you. "CARL."

I read the letter quietly through, then tore it into tiny bits, and dropped them over the rail. As I turned away, I must have looked white or shaken, for my steamer acquaintance, Mr. Thurston, came up to me, and asked if I were ill. No, I had received some rather unpleasant news, "merely a business matter," I lied to him, and added that I had decided to take his advice, and return to Europe by way of New York.

He kept his promise to attend to my tickets, luggage, etc. It was fortunate that I had someone to depend upon—Francine could hardly have managed such things alone—for I was numb, dazed. I passed the few days that elapsed before I found myself again on shipboard as one in a dream. It was true that I had tried not to hope, yet the blow was none the less severe, at times it seemed unendurable. I did not believe that I could take up my life as before; could go on planning, journeying from country to country, singing, singing, always singing, as though my heart were not broken, as I told myself that it was. I did not answer the letter, and derived some slight satisfaction from the thought that until I chose to notify him, not even Fano knew of my whereabouts.

I think Mr. Thurston found me poor company at first, and perhaps regretted that he had persuaded me to change my plans, but after the first crushing effects of the blow had passed, I made desperate efforts for

my pride's sake to appear as before. I was glad of the brief respite which the voyage afforded me from planning for the future. I felt such disgust with life that I sometimes even contemplated retiring from the stage, burying myself in some quiet spot where at least I should be free to brood over what I felt was my ruined life. Meanwhile I drifted.

Soon after leaving Panama, Mr. Thurston joined me on deck one evening, accompanied by a friend whom he introduced to me; a middle-aged, fat, prosperous-looking American business man of the type with which I later became familiar. He was a New Yorker, in so far as one of such widely scattered interests could be said to belong to any city. He had "run down to Central America on a little matter of business," he informed me, and had been surprised and pleased to discover his old friend Thurston among the passengers on board ship.

The newcomer was content to talk by the hour about experiences he had had, people he had met, and in spite of myself he amused and diverted me. We three were much together during the voyage and towards the end of it a pronounced trait of Mr. Steele's—that was not his name, but it will suffice—led to a sudden turn in my own affairs. He was violently American. There was, according to him, no other country like America, which easily led the world in business, science, inventive genius, enterprise, etc., while if she had not as yet greatly distinguished herself in the arts, that was merely because she had not cared, had not had time to devote herself to them.

Mr. Thurston had told him that I was an American,

and when he learned that I was an opera singer he was sufficiently interested to ask where I had sung. Of course on that subject I could be eloquent, or I should have belied my calling, and he listened quite attentively to a fairly brief account of my career, finally asking abruptly why I had never sung in my own country. My explanation that I had been busy elsewhere did not satisfy him, and he demanded what my plans were for the coming winter. The fact that they were not yet settled seemed to please him.

He then informed me that he knew Blank, "the fellow who is managing the Metropolitan," well, and that he should speak to him about engaging me. "If you're as good as you say" (I had said nothing of the sort), "that's where you ought to be," he continued. "An American girl ought to be singing in her own country, and I'll see what I can do."

I looked upon this as not to be considered seriously, but he referred to our conversation on the day before we were to land, asked at what hotel I should stop, and requested me to give him "a week to see what I can do."

I laughed and attempted to pass it off as a joke, but that evening, as we were walking on deck, Thurston declared that Steele was probably sufficiently influential to manage the matter if he chose, adding that apparently in my case he did choose.

"I really would stay over, say for a fortnight," he urged, "since in any case you have made no plans yet."

Although I still did not take the matter seriously, this suited me very well. I was more than willing to drift for a fortnight longer, nor could it greatly affect

my future to do so. It was August, and if Fano had not already practically concluded some contract for me, there probably would be nothing to decide upon immediately.

The amazing happened. After about a week, during which I amused myself fairly well, going about with Mr. Thurston and some of his friends, I returned one evening to my hotel to find a note from an unknown person who was, so he informed me, the secretary of Blank, the manager. He asked me if he might call the following morning at eleven, giving a telephone number that I might notify him. I was decidedly surprised, especially as I had not seen Mr. Steele since we landed, and supposed that of course he had long since forgotten me in some fresh "little business matter."

The secretary called. After the usual preliminaries, he remarked that he understood that I was at liberty to consider an offer for the following season. He seemed fairly well informed as to the principal theatres in which I had sung, and could not have derived all this information from Mr. Steele, since I had not gone so into details with him. There was a good deal of fencing between us, but the outcome was a definite offer of a contract for the coming season at the Metropolitan Opera House for a period of twenty weeks, with a guarantee of thirty performances, at five hundred dollars a performance.

The money question was the one most hotly contested between us. The original offer was, if I remember rightly, three hundred dollars a performance, which was indignantly refused by me, but five hundred was

as high as I could raise the figure. I had been receiving one thousand per performance, and for several engagements prior to my last one the amount had been higher than what I was now offered, but I could see the advantage of the longer season, as the secretary pointed out, and I still felt an odd longing to remain in my own country, where, were we not constantly informed, all men are free and equal?

What a change had come over me! A few years back, and I should have indignantly refused to consider myself less than superior to many of my fellow countrymen. In spite also of my week in a New York hotel, where prices were even higher than in South America, hitherto the extreme of expensiveness to me, I fancied that living in my own country would surely prove much cheaper than life abroad, traveling as constantly as I had done of late. At all events, I finally accepted this last offer, and the contract was brought me to sign before my fortnight in New York had expired.

This was the first contract that I had ever signed on my own sole responsibility, and at least some of the consequences were due to my inexperience. I contracted for the thirty performances to begin on or about December first, agreed to arrive in New York not less than ten days previous to this date, and to be ready with any and all of the following rôles: the *Queen* in "The Huguenots," *Violetta, Lucia, Gilda, Rosina, Zerlina, Micaela, Marguerite* in "Faust," *Leonora* in "Il Trovatore," and *Filina* in "Mignon." All but the last two were in my repertoire, but three must be re-studied in French, and it seemed to be a long and curious list. However that did not trouble me

greatly, although I had only three months in which to prepare my rôles. There were also one or two clauses over which I did not concern myself; certain cities were mentioned in which I might be expected to sing, something was said about concert appearances, but I am not sure that I read the contract through, so I ought to be glad that I did not involve myself in more serious trouble by signing it.

I may be considered very lucky to have secured a contract at all at such short notice, so young, and with an opera house which I later learned is the goal of every young American and of many foreign singers, but there were, as I discovered later, several contributory circumstances. Mr. Steel undoubtedly had considerable influence with the Board of Directors and the manager personally; they were glad to do him a favor when it also suited their convenience. A certain European soprano with whom they had been negotiating, and had believed her contract practically signed, had thrown them over at this late day; her rôles were also my rôles, and she had demanded more money than I accepted. Finally, to offset what might have been real good fortune, Mr. Steele was absent from New York for some of his many enterprises during the entire winter that I spent in the city, and any advantages that might have accrued to me from his presence were thereby lost. I came to regret very seriously that I had ever paid that visit to New York, although when I finally sailed for Europe to purchase stage as well as private wardrobe, I felt quite pleased with myself, and glad that I should soon be returning.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COVETED METROPOLITAN CONTRACT

I DISPATCHED a brief cablegram to Fano, notifying him of my signed contract, and added the word: "Returning."

Instead of sailing directly for Genoa, I took a French liner, and to the delight of Francine, went to Paris. I had never yet set foot in the French capital, and was tired of the amazed looks, the exclamations which my admission of this had recently called forth. Then, too, I was anxious to postpone as long as possible the receipt of any letters which Carl might have written, so Francine and I loitered a bit, doing shopping, sightseeing. I spent three entire afternoons in the Louvre galleries, and wished that I had more time. I could not linger long, and had to be satisfied with a mere glimpse of the city, promising myself to return. Then we went to Milan.

Fano was disposed to be offended with me. He unbent slightly when he perceived, without any direct mention of the matter between us, that I had no intention of depriving him of his usual commission on this new contract, for which, of course, he was not in the least responsible; but he was now recognized as my agent, and I had no wish to lose his interest. Notwithstanding, he was dissatisfied.

"What in the world induced you to sign for North America?" he questioned discontentedly. "You will add nothing to your reputation by singing there. As for money, you could get as much as that here, and certainly thirty performances are not so many. You could have had that number with, say, Lisbon, Barcelona, Naples, Rome, probably Milan. I had other plans, too. To be sure, you will not be traveling about, but think of the long ocean voyage." (He forgot the journeys to South America that I had made.) "I cannot think what has come over you, Luisa. Nor do you look as well as usual. Have you been ill?"

The question was asked in such an irritable tone that it quite lost any effect of consideration for my welfare.

"Ma!" and he shrugged his shoulders resignedly, "what is done is done. Let me see your contract."

He read it through; grumbled at the clause about concerts.

"You are an opera singer. Who dictated such a ridiculous repertoire? You have never sung *Leonora.* Why should you learn it for America? The opera in which you make your début not even mentioned! Oh, you must have been mad, quite mad. *Filina?* Not so bad, but then you have two new rôles to learn. What is this about French? Oh, nonsense! You'll come back here with your voice white and nasal. Were you then entirely out of your senses?"

He discouraged me a bit, but he growled so persistently that I ended by laughing at him, although he refused to laugh with me. I settled down in Milan, although the days were still very warm, and began work at once.

It was more than a week after my arrival that a letter in Carl's handwriting was sent by Fano to my hotel. I felt that the wisest course would be to burn it unopened, but that was beyond my strength. Finally I tore the envelope, and read page after page of incoherent entreaties, reproaches, mad assertions of his undying love for me, with threats of what he might be driven to, did I continue to refuse his love, offered always on the same terms. My cheeks burned, my hands grew ice-cold, I shook as though with a chill, but I read it to the end. It had no power to shake my resolution, but my half-won calm vanished before visions of what might have been. More nights of weeping, days when it seemed impossible to fix my attention on what I had to do, lay before me.

How I blessed all the work that must be done, the engagements which I must keep! In time I struggled back to something like peace of mind. I did not answer the letter; two others that arrived I burned unopened. Towards the end of October, I returned to Paris for a fortnight. As the cab in which Francine and I were being driven to the Milan station approached this, there was a block in the traffic. When we moved on again, I caught a glimpse of the occupant of a cab moving in the opposite direction. For an instant I thought that it was Carl. Then as we passed on I called myself a fool to fancy resemblances where probably none existed. It was not until more than a year later that I learned that it was indeed Carl.

He had come on a mad impulse to try in person what his letters had not effected. He burst in upon Fano the morning after my departure, demanding my

address. Whether Fano really interfered for what he believed my artistic welfare—he would have considered morals no concern of his—or merely resented what I can well believe was an imperious if not insolent manner, I do not know. Nor when months later he told me of this occurrence did I question him. The fact remains that he disclaimed all knowledge of my whereabouts then, merely remarking that I had left for a long engagement in America. Possibly the coldness of his manner checked even Carl.

Months later I received one brief, horrible letter from Carl, addressed in a handwriting which I did not recognize, and forwarded by Fano to New York. He informed me that I might be interested to learn that he was amusing himself with women less coldly selfish and unfeeling than I, and enclosed a brief paragraph from one of those papers which occupy themselves with society, and which commented cynically upon the relations of a prominent young officer and an evidently notorious woman, an actress or singer probably.

This letter did not anger me. I could read between the lines too well. Rather I felt pity for him as well as myself, a dull ache of wretchedness. But in time this passed. That letter was the last I ever received from Carl.

As the steamer on which Francine and I sailed from Havre drew alongside the dock in New York, on a cold, drizzly afternoon, a man from the opera house met me. Several young men stood near him. He took charge of my trunks as far as was possible, and I waited for what seemed a very long time, until the customs men had finished examining my luggage, and

had asked many questions. The summer before, thanks to Mr. Steele, all this wearisome formality had been greatly expedited.

Meanwhile the young men asked me questions, some of which I thought extremely impertinent, as for instance: "Are you married?" "Engaged, perhaps?" "No Persian Prince or Turkish Pasha up your sleeve? You're sure?" "Is it true that your father was a fruit peddler in New Orleans?" and so on. Of course some questions were legitimate enough, but I had then had no experience with American reporters, did not know how to answer, and was absolutely ignorant of the art of gently leading them to say just what you yourself wish to see in print. That art, as I have since had reason to note, is thoroughly understood by a very few artists popular in America, and they benefit greatly by such knowledge.

From time to time the young man from the theatre made a joking remark to them, but in any case I was too tired, bored, to be the genial, self-satisfied, but apparently ingenuous young prima donna, overjoyed to be back on her native shores, that I should have tried to appear.

Finally the examination of the luggage was finished. The man from the opera house asked me if I had reserved rooms at any hotel. When I replied that I had not, he asked in a weary tone where I contemplated going. I mentioned the hotel where I had stopped in the summer, one recommended by Mr. Steele, merely because this was the first that occurred to me. He seemed impressed, found a cab, put me and Francine, now distinctly cross, into it, and such of our hand lug-

gage as could be wedged around us, or beside the driver, and informing me that he would see that my trunks were sent after me as soon as possible, shut the door upon us, gave the address, and we left the dingy, gloomy docks.

Arrived at the hotel, the clerk informed me indifferently that almost every room was taken, and only at what seemed to me an outrageous price could I find accommodation. I could not go elsewhere then, so resigned myself to the expenditure for at least a few days. A cup of coffee somewhat revived Francine and me, and she set about unpacking such belongings as I had brought with us with a more cheerful expression.

Three times cards of newspaper men were brought up to me before dinner, but I declined to see anyone, pleading fatigue. To one very persistent youth who followed close upon his card, I remarked that as I had just arrived I had nothing to say, and suggesting that he wait until he heard me sing before trying to write about me, I walked into my bedroom, and left Francine to get rid of him, which after a time she did. Then I ate an expensive, not especially good dinner, alone of course, in the huge, brilliantly lighted and gaudy restaurant of the hotel, and was glad to retire early.

I had expected word of some kind from the management the following morning, notice of rehearsal, anything, but as nothing came, I waited until afternoon, then calling a cab, directed that I be driven to the stage door of the Metropolitan Opera House. I did not take Francine with me.

The stage door opened directly into a kind of outer

office, where a youth sat apparently engrossed in reading a paper. He finally looked up, and I asked for Mr. Blank.

"Can't see anybody. He's busy," was the reply, and he returned to his paper.

"Kindly say to Mr. Blank that Signorina Della Rocca wishes to see him," I remarked firmly, indignant.

He glanced up, seemed on the point of ignoring my request, evidently thought better of it, for he rose reluctantly, asked for my card, and dispatched another and smaller boy with it. Then with the air of one who has done all that can be expected of him, he picked up the paper again.

I waited ten minutes or more, then the smaller boy returned.

"She's to come up," he announced; the other boy nodded, and the speaker then piloted me upstairs, into a comfortably furnished room with no one in it. Here he left me.

After a few more minutes of waiting, the gentleman who had conducted the negotiations for my contract came in, shook hands politely, though with a worried look, and asked me to pass into still another room, where sat a pleasant-faced, also worried looking man who rose, introduced himself as Mr. Blank, and expressed himself as pleased to make my acquaintance. He asked after my health, hoped that I had had a pleasant voyage, made a few other remarks, and then looked at me inquiringly, while the secretary hovered near.

I explained that I had called to ask when I should be singing, and in what opera.

"Yes, yes, of course. Well, for the present I cannot say, Mademoiselle," he replied. "Our season opens next week; you have probably seen the announcements in the morning papers. We have not yet decided in what opera you will first be heard, but you will be notified in due time. Give yourself no uneasiness about that. Meantime, if you wish to come to any of the rehearsals and the performances when they begin, just speak to Mr. Stein. Max, see that he meets Mademoiselle as she goes downstairs, will you? He will attend to it. And now is there anything else that we can do for you? Pray speak to Max, Mr. Levison here" (this was the secretary), "and he will be glad to be of assistance to you."

This was so evidently a dismissal, although an extremely polite one, that I took it as such, greatly to Mr. Blank's apparent relief, but as we passed into the outer room, I asked "Max" if he could not recommend to me a less expensive hotel than the one where I was then stopping.

"Oh, yes, the most expensive one in New York," he murmured, when I named it. "Yes, certainly."

He drew a notebook from his pocket, pondered deeply for a moment, then wrote down four or five names, assuring me that he thought any one of these would suit me, and they were all fairly near the theatre. "Save cab fare, you know," he added, tearing out the page of addresses, and handing it to me. The sum that the cabman had demanded for driving me the short distance from my hotel to the opera house had already made me realize the necessity for economy.

Not forgetting instructions, Max then escorted me

to another office, where a genial, white-haired but not old gentleman stopped his work to be introduced to me as Mr. Stein. He assured me that he would "look after" me whenever possible for such performances as I wished to attend, and further advised the worried-looking Levison to see that I met "Jim," so there would be no trouble about my attending rehearsals when I liked.

"Jim" was found; a big, burly man, one of the doormen. He looked me over, agreed that he would know me in future, and gruffly but amiably promised to see that I "got in." Then as my longer stay seemed quite unnecessary, I departed, called another cab, and had myself driven to one after another of the hotels on the list which Mr. Levison had given me.

When I was almost in despair, I found one that seemed possible, at not too outrageous a price. Here I engaged rooms, and decided to move in at once.

On my way to the lift in my present hotel, I stopped at the news-stand, and purchased a paper to look at the opera announcements. While hunting for these, my eyes fell on a headline:

AMERICAN SINGER ARRIVES
NOTHING TO SAY
GREATLY PREFERS EUROPE

The article beneath these, with an atrocious wood-cut, supposed to be a portrait of myself, informed those interested that:

"Signorina Della Rocca, with an Italian accent,

please, arrived yesterday to fill an engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House.

"Out in Kansas City, where she was raised, the boys and girls who went to public school with her, knew her as Della Rock, or Dell for short. But that was in the days when she used to sign hymns at the melodeon Sunday evenings, in the parlor, while Pa sat out on the front steps in his shirt sleeves in summer, or by the stove in the kitchen in winter, and said he 'guessed his gal, Dellie, could sing better'n most of the church singers in town.'

"That was before little Dellie thought she'd like to be an opera singer, and before her Pa said she could go to Europe and learn to be one if it took his last cent, which it pretty nearly did. But anyhow little Dell Rock is back now in her home country, even if she does think it isn't up to Europe. Only now she is the Signorina Della Rocca, *if* you please, and don't forget the Italian accent."

I threw down the paper in disgust, although the absurd article, figment of a youthful reporter's brain, eventually found its way into my scrap-book. At the time I could see nothing funny in it, and wondered what gave rise to such absurdities. I knew that I had said nothing to occasion it, but I did not then know that with that class of reporter it had been far better if I had told him something, anything. I had refused to be interviewed, had abandoned him to his own resources to provide a "story," and behold the result.

By the following evening we were quite settled, Francine and I. Still I had no word from the management of any appearances or rehearsals. I had

looked carefully through the announcements for the opening week. "Faust" was the first opera, with a soprano whose name was not then familiar to me; "Carmen" followed, and after the name of the artist who would assume the title rôle, a singer of whom I had heard much, came another unfamiliar name, evidently the *Micaela* of the performance. A third opera; still my name did not appear, nor in the two works already announced for the following week. In one of these, my own "Lucia," another soprano whom I had never heard, but of whose triumphs in Paris and London I had read, would make her first appearance in New York.

I felt decidedly uneasy as I laid the paper down. I hardly think that I had expected to be featured as the star of the company, as I had been in Santiago, yet this ignoring of me appalled me. I tried to believe that my turn would surely come, say in another week, but in what opera? "Rigoletto," perhaps, or "Il Barbiere." Alas for my expectations. My American début was made under unfortunate conditions, as I shall later narrate.

I attended several of the rehearsals, including a dress rehearsal of "Carmen." The protagonist merely hummed through her music, even so she promised to be most interesting; the tenor was hardly more vocal, but I found the orchestra, directed by a fine Italian conductor of whom I had often heard in Italy, although never met, decidedly disappointing; there was a lack of ensemble, apparently due to insufficient rehearsals. The chorus was composed of fat, elderly creatures who moved heavily about, and sang with no shading in

Italian, while the artists were singing in French. The *Micaela* was a slim, rather pretty woman, with a thin, pinched voice. I returned home indignant. Why was not I singing that rôle, although it would probably be quite overshadowed by the singing and acting of the beautiful *Carmen?*

On the morning of the opening came a courteous note from Mr. Stein, inclosing a box seat ticket, and apologizing for sending only one, since the house was practically sold out, adding that I should find some of my colleagues in the box. I donned one of my prettiest evening gowns, took a cab, and went, curious to view the scene of my winter activities.

The house was imposing, although I found the foyer bare and ugly after those of other opera houses in which I had sung. The entrance on a busy street had none of the impressiveness afforded by a fine façade, and a building set apart in a square by itself. A very well-dressed crowd was pouring into the vestibule as I arrived, and late comers were bargaining with men outside the doors for tickets, while a sign at the box office announced that no more were to be had there. Mr. Stein was standing near the entrance, and greeted me with his usual courtesy which, as I was later to learn, nothing ever appeared to ruffle. I made my way upstairs to my box. It was full, but as I paused in the doorway, and glanced about in surprise, a man rose reluctantly from one of the rear chairs, and without speaking to me murmured something to one of the women seated in front, and left. I took the vacant chair. Of the three women seated in front, I recognized one as the *Frasquita* of the "Carmen" rehearsal,

a common looking Italian, almost a chorus singer she would have been considered in Italy. The other two I did not remember ever to have seen. All three seemed on friendly terms with one another, and after staring at me rudely, resumed their interrupted conversation. One of the two men, the other occupants of the box, was an Italian also—he looked like a barber—but I afterwards discovered that he was another of the small part singers. He rose at my entrance, and when I was seated politely offered me his program, as I had neglected to provide myself with one.

Few of the boxes were occupied; the stalls and three large galleries above the boxes were crowded. In a few minutes the lights were lowered, and the performance began. The first act of "Faust" offered nothing startling. The tenor was evidently saving his voice. The entrance of the Devil, all in scarlet, enlivened matters somewhat. He was a splendid looking fellow, big, well shaped, graceful, with a rich voice. Very lovely looked *Marguerite* in the tableau, and *Faust* was magnificent when he threw aside his old man's wrappings, and stood revealed in a handsome pale blue costume, but even in the *finale* he continued saving his voice. The curtain fell, the lights went up, and more of the boxes filled. The second act displayed the chorus and ballet to poor advantage. I thought of La Scala, as I watched the clumsy movements, the lack of agility of these dancers, and wondered what audiences there would have said to such. A baritone with whom I had sung during my last season in Madrid made a fine *Valentine,* and *Mephisto* sang his "Calf of Gold" so well that he was forced to repeat it.

Then *Faust* addressed the lovely *Marguerite,* one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen on the stage. Her voice was clear, cold, but she was such an exquisite picture that one could forgive her this. In the Garden Scene the tenor was superb. I forgot to criticize his voice, although its quality was not remarkable, so well did he use it, so impassioned was his acting, his movements so graceful. I recognized a great artist. *Marguerite,* too, thawed when acting with him. In the Jewel Scene she charmed more by her beauty than her singing, which latter did not thrill me in the least, and I wished that I were in her place.

Before the Garden Scene was finished, all the boxes were filled with gorgeously dressed women, wearing magnificent jewels, and with black-clad escorts. I missed the brilliant uniforms of foreign audiences, nor did these people any more than Italians hesitate to interrupt the scene with applause, or to converse in quite audible tones during such portions of the opera as did not interest them. All of the principals of the cast were recalled again and again after the third act, and the remaining ones, and it was late when the opera was over.

I went to the first performance of "Carmen." I was fascinated by the protagonist, her beauty, her intense, passionate interpretation of the wilful cigarette girl, her warm, lovely voice which she seemed to color at will. The tenor of the opening night gave a fine performance of *Don Jose;* the *Micaela* was colorless, pretty, shrill-voiced, but sufficiently applauded.

During an intermission, I went out into the foyer

to get air, for the theatre was oppressively warm, crowded as it was, with every seat occupied, and many standing. There I encountered my acquaintance, the baritone. He was talking with many gestures to two or three people who were hanging on his words, greeted me effusively, asked when I was singing, in what opera my début was to be made, and I evaded answering as best I could. The meeting left me more discontented than I had been before. Something was wrong, but as yet I could not see where the fault lay.

Meanwhile the days passed, and for all notice that was taken of me I might have been the veriest nonentity. I was free to go to performances at the opera house if I wished, or to watch others rehearse. I heard the much-heralded soprano in *Lucia,* admired her beautiful voice, felt that my agility equaled if indeed did not surpass hers, and I knew that I was a far better actress. I heard the soprano of the opening night in another opera, Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette," which I had not heard before, and liked greatly. Here, too, the tenor commanded my warmest admiration. He was an ideal *Romeo.* But hearing opera did not tend to satisfy me with my lot. I wanted to be singing on that stage myself, and the baritone, my one acquaintance in the company, after asking me several times when my début was to take place, rather avoided me. My days were my own, to dispose of as I chose, and since I was becoming bored to death, I one day wandered into a language school whose sign attracted my attention on an aimless walk, and arranged to take a daily German lesson.

Nearly a fortnight after the season had begun, I

was sitting in my room reading at about ten o'clock in the evening when the telephone rang furiously. Mr. Levison of the opera house wished to speak to me. In a few minutes a conversation about as follows ensued:

"Mademoiselle Della Rocca?"

"Yes, this is Mademoiselle Della Rocca."

"You are up in the *Queen* in 'The Huguenots'?"

"Certainly."

"Good. Please be ready to leave for Philadelphia to-morrow morning. The special opera train leaves Jersey City at ten. The artist announced is ill, so you will sing the rôle."

"But Mr. Levison," I protested, "how about a rehearsal? I have never sung with Signor Mantinelli" (the conductor).

"It will be Bevilacqua," was the answer, naming an assistant conductor, "and there's no time for a rehearsal. He'll go over the cuts on the train with you," and this time the receiver was hung up before I could make any further objections.

I was aghast. Not that I doubted my ability to sing the rôle, for I knew it thoroughly. But did they not realize that a début was important? By what right was I thrown into a performance thus? Greatly annoyed, I called Francine. She was more dismayed than I.

"Mademoiselle, your costume? Do you not remember? It is gone."

Too true. I now recalled that one of my trunks had been missing when the others were delivered at my hotel. I had notified the theatre, they had prom-

ised to investigate, but nothing had been heard of it. I was inclined to refuse to sing under such circumstances, even were I to forfeit my contract, for my costumes for the *Queen* were in that trunk. I called up the opera house, and asked for Mr. Levison. After a long wait, he answered peevishly, and I told him that my costume was in the trunk they had not yet found for me. I heard a confused murmur of voices, then:

"We will do the best we can. You are about the size of Mme. Doria. We will try to borrow something from her. If not, get one somewhere else for you. Don't worry, but be sure not to miss the train." Again he rang off.

I hardly knew whether to be annoyed or amused. The idea of making my American début in a costume procured from I knew not whom, disgusted me, as did the fact that the management was willing to push an artist on in such a manner. Was this the great American company which I had joined? It seemed rather like some barnstorming troupe.

However, the next morning I made my way to Jersey City, and the special train. The conductor, looking worried, but very polite, went over the *tempi* with me. From some remark, I concluded that he fancied me almost an amateur. He asked if I had ever sung the rôle before. This was too much, and I told him of some of the theatres in which I had sung, some of the conductors under whose batons I had appeared. His respect for me increased; he even remarked that it was a shame for me to be pushed on so, adding: "But over here we are fortunate if we know in the

morning what opera is to be sung that night." He told me of changes of bills at two hours' notice; of unrehearsed performances, *prime donne* or tenors hurriedly summoned from dinner to "save a performance," and I wondered.

The theatre in Philadelphia was not bad. An American, a fine artist, was the *Valentine* and the star, only one of the big quartette of male singers having come over. The other rôles were taken by inferior or at least unknown singers.

I do not know where my costume came from; it was correct enough, of white satin, but flimsy and soiled. Assisted by Francine, I donned it, and my own stage jewels, and surveyed myself discontentedly. The dress did not fit me at all. I thought wrathfully of my own handsome, perfectly fitting costume, but went on the stage determined to do my best.

I thought the audience cold; later I learned that they were angry at the substitution of two singers in the cast. I sang well, and was heartily applauded after my aria, and at the close of the act was brought out again and again with *Valentine* and the tenor, a good artist, although not the equal of he of the "Faust" and "Carmen" performances. The soprano was very amiable, praised my voice and method, and told me that she, too, had been trained in Italy. It was not what she said, but a certain indefinable something in manner that suggested that she was genuinely surprised at my performance. Tenor and conductor made me feel the same, and the latter's remark: "You should be heard in New York. It is a shame. You sing too well

not to be cast for those performances," filled me with dismay. What was the trouble?

We returned to New York directly after the performance. The following day I went to the theatre, determined to urge them on to find my trunk. Mr. Levison was, as usual, looking worried, but polite. He assured me that he would do his best, and showed me some notices of the Philadelphia performance.

"You made quite a hit," he remarked. "See what they say about you."

I glanced at the notices. They were good. One spoke of my "beautiful, bird-like tones," my "remarkable agility"; another praised my range, the youthful freshness of my voice, and hoped that I might be heard soon again. But I thought the secretary a bit patronizing.

"If I did have my usual success," I remarked, with the faintest accent on the adjective, "it was no thanks to the management. It is outrageous to send an artist on like that, in Heaven knows whose costume. Were I not so experienced, I should probably have had a fiasco."

He agreed that it was a pity, but unfortunately such things would happen at times.

"And then Philadelphia is all very well," I resumed, "but when am I to make my New York début?"

"Oh, yes, I wished to speak to you about that. Mr. Blank wishes you to sing on Sunday evening, at the concert. Two numbers, please."

I was annoyed, and said that I preferred to make my début in opera, but Mr. Levison politely but firmly waved aside my objections, and when I still demurred,

murmured something about consulting my contract, that "concert appearances were to be counted as performances," etc. In no pleasant tone I demanded to know when I could rehearse with the orchestra.

Another vexation! There would, indeed, be several orchestral numbers, but the singers would be accompanied on the piano. I could not think of singing an aria to piano accompaniment. How was I to do myself justice with a group of songs in the huge Metropolitan? I decided on the waltz song which I had coached with Waldberger, and a group of old Italian songs.

I had decided success at the concert. I wore a becoming Parisian gown. I repeated the last part of the waltz, but declined an encore after the group of songs, since the applause hardly seemed to me to warrant it. The house was crowded. The other three singers, none of them important artists, all sang arias to piano accompaniment; part of the opera house orchestra played several selections perfunctorily.

The next morning there was the briefest of notice in one paper. Later I learned that the music critics seldom attended these concerts.

Of that season in America I could not for years think without annoyance. It, more than anything else, is responsible for what some managers afterwards styled my exasperating habit of insisting upon everything imaginable being specified in a contract, before I would sign it.

"I will say for Della Rocca," I once overheard one of these tell two sympathizing friends, after he had vainly tried to induce me to sign a contract as he had

drawn it up, "that when once she gives her word she'll stick to it. But before she signs, she'll make you provide for everything possible, and some things you've probably never thought of."

During the season, then, I sang at five other Sunday concerts, finally followed the example of others, and one night sang the Jewel Song from "Faust," and quite "brought down the house." I became popular with concert audiences.

My first appearance in opera in New York was as *Micaela* in "Carmen," preceded merely by a piano rehearsal of the duet with the great tenor, who was charming, and complimented me at its close. I was applauded quite heartily at the performance, but Fate was against a real success. The opera had already been given several times that season, and I was not announced in a manner to attract attention. The *Carmen* and the tenor were the stars of the evening, and it would have required a miracle to arouse much enthusiasm for *Micaela.*

I sang the rôle again in New York, in Brooklyn and in Philadelphia. I had good success, nothing more. Had the rôle been given to me first it might have been otherwise, but the American soprano who had sung the rôle on the opening night of the season was the only "star" *Micaela* of the company, and this because she was popular not only with the audiences, but socially as well. The other *Micaela,* whose voice did not compare with mine, was given preference over me after the star because of the interest in her welfare manifested by one of the wealthiest stockholders, and

the management could not, if it would, disregard such claims.

One chance came to me outside of New York. "I Pagliacci" was given. In New York the rôle of *Nedda* was sung by the high-priced soprano who had sung *Lucia* and other of my rôles. When it was planned to give the work in several other cities, another less expensive soprano was called for rehearsal, and made a flat failure, I was told.

One morning I was sent for, and Mr. Levison met me looking more worried than ever. With his office door closed, he asked:

"I suppose you do not happen to sing *Nedda,* Mademoiselle?"

"Certainly I do."

He looked happier.

"You heard the performance here last week?"

"I did, and also the original performance at La Scala."

"Do you think you could possibly sing it next Tuesday evening?"

"Certainly." I waited.

He actually smiled.

"Then I may tell Mr. Blank that it is all right?"

"Wait," I interrupted. "The rôle is not stipulated in my contract." By this time I had almost memorized that contract.

"No, of course not. But I am sure that if you will oblige the management it will be appreciated, and—"

"I am perfectly willing to oblige the management on one condition," I announced.

He sighed, but waited.

"I am tired of being thrown into a performance as I have been. I have never sung the rôle, but I will do so on condition that I have two orchestral rehearsals."

He looked so relieved that I wondered what he had expected. We compromised on one full piano rehearsal and one with orchestra, and he flew to make the arrangements. I sang the rôle three times outside of New York, and received fine notices, unusually long, since the work was a novelty, but several critics deplored the absence from the cast of the high-priced soprano, who had originally been promised. One critic remarked that: "While Mademoiselle Della Rocca sang the music beautifully, and acted with spirit, still she was not Alba."

I began to realize that, unknown as I was, I had little chance of any extraordinary success in this country, where everything seemed to be against me.

And so the season passed. I studied and sang the rôle of *Cherubino* in the "Nozze di Figaro," merely because by this time I grasped at any chance of being heard. I was in fine voice, had taken great trouble with my costumes, and had real success. It was even mentioned as regrettable that I had not been given more opportunities.

In January, I was engaged as soloist by a big German club. The hall was crowded with an audience which reminded me of Germany, so closely attentive were all. They applauded me vehemently after the Mad Scene, which went very well, and after the *Lorelei,* in German, I was forced to give an encore.

Another bright spot was my appearance at a big

Italian benefit, where I was applauded to the echo, forced to give encores, presented with a huge bouquet tied with the Italian colors, and talked Italian to my heart's content at a banquet which followed. Once more I felt the real prima donna, instead of the filler-in, which had, it seemed to me, been my position at the opera house.

Probably largely due to these appearances, I was offered a concert tour to follow immediately upon the conclusion of my season at the opera, and accepted it. The opera management offered to renew my contract for the next season at the same terms, and I declined. They offered certain concessions, a guarantee of a very few New York appearances. Again I declined. Then they raised my fee by fifty dollars a performance, but when I declined even this, they gave me up.

In reading over these pages, I find that I have given the impression of a lonely winter. I could have filled my days and evenings with social engagements after my first few appearances in New York, had I so desired. I was urged to attend luncheons given by clubs or to be the guest of honor at receptions given by others, not very important clubs these, since I was not sufficiently prominent to be in demand at the larger functions. Rather the idea seemed to be that any member of the Metropolitan Opera House would be an attraction for these minor entertainments.

Utter strangers invited me to luncheon or dinner. I accepted a few invitations, chiefly out of curiosity, but was too bored to continue. To be flattered by people whom I had never seen before, and probably would never see again; to have silly girls ask me if

it were not "too lovely for anything to be an opera singer" palled on me. The interesting people whom I would have enjoyed meeting did not ask strangers to their homes. These other hostesses were merely lion hunters on a small scale.

The opera season ended. I had wondered about Francine, for I could not afford to take her with me on the concert tour. But one morning she came to me, and tearfully informed me that she had had an offer from one of the opera singers who was going directly to Paris. Greatly as she hated to leave me, she had decided to accept.

"My health suffers, Mademoiselle," she told me dramatically, "in this so *triste* country, and remain here longer I cannot. When Mademoiselle returns to Europe, I will leave anyone for her, for she is an angel, *mais, pour le moment,*" she shrugged.

Although I knew that I should miss her, this settled one difficulty.

By the end of February I was on tour. I traveled continuously, but fortunately, the towns where I sang were seldom very far distant from each other. I appeared with orchestra at big "festivals," I sang to piano accompaniment in halls, private houses, etc. The tour was a great success, and the manager offered me another in the autumn, but I had made other plans.

One feature of this first American tour would have been amusing had it not seemed almost tragic. This was the number of girls who besieged my hotels, waited for me at stage entrances, always for one of two reasons: to see a prima donna at close range, and beg for her autograph, or to sing for me. Sometimes the

girls came in twos and threes, sometimes they came alone. Rarely they were accompanied by older women, or a mother. Sometimes I heard them sing, for at first I took these petitions very seriously; at other times, with the best will, it was impossible. Many of these girls had really fine voices. All wanted to be great opera singers, and seemed to fancy that with a short period of study this was easily within the possibilities.

When I warned them of the years of hard work that would be required, even if they had all the necessary qualifications, they listened, and usually looked skeptical. Sometimes I heard afterwards that I was considered "very jealous," by some of these girls and their friends, and "afraid of being eclipsed." For some, with evident talent, I felt sorry; they had no money, there seemed no chance that they could ever accomplish their desires, for it would have taken the fortune of a multi-millionaire to help all of these, while I had no money to aid even one.

CHAPTER XIV

ONCE MORE A STUDENT

EARLY in December I arrived in Paris. Here I had decided to spend the winter, perfect my French, and study. Several of the great artists of the Metropolitan, notably the great tenor, had inspired me with a desire to broaden my art. I felt that I was in danger of getting into a rut, and had come to realize that my French was anything but perfect.

I had rather a heated correspondence with Fano. He thought me either quite mad, or that I had some secret personal reason for such a decision. French would probably ruin the impostation of my voice, etc. But I persisted.

After much hunting for a suitable living place, I finally met a woman who was looking for an apartment; we decided to take one together, and were lucky enough to hear of one suited to our needs.

This little flat was the nearest to a home that I had known since the days of the dear Fiesole villa, and in spite of some inconveniences I enjoyed it. I was often lonely, in the great city where I knew no one, and which seemed cold and dismal, for I had arrived in the season when Paris surely presents her least attractive side. It rained almost every day, the air was damply penetrating, and I often sighed for Italy, and almost regretted my decision.

After I had hunted up a teacher whom the French basso in New York, one of the most finished artists I have ever known, had recommended, I was soon so interested in my work that I had no time for loneliness.

This teacher was charming, and had been a great artist. He had a small but beautiful voice which still preserved much of its quality. He had sung all over the world, and had many interesting experiences to relate. He was just the teacher for me, and found me exactly the right person to perfect my French diction.

I worked with a retired actor as well, but learned most in this respect from watching performances, now at the Opera, now at the *Comédie Française,* the *Odéon, Gymnase.* At the former, I heard some great artists, and others who sang so badly that I was amazed. At the theaters, I saw the greatest actors and actresses, studied and profited by their methods.

Then, to make me quite contented, one day as I was returning from a lesson, I heard a little shriek, turned, and there was Francine. We greeted each other with joy. She informed me that she was not at all content with her present employer, the opera singer. With shrugs, she explained that the lady had a violent temper, and also that her mode of life was anything but correct.

"Not that I care what her private conduct is," she explained. *"Mon Dieu!* No. Let her amuse herself as she chooses. It is the late hours, the irregularity. One never knows when she will return home. And then the rages! *Mademoiselle, je ne le peux supporter plus!"*

I explained to Francine that I was living very simply, had no need of a lady's maid, but she grasped the situation quickly. Had I a *femme de ménage?* Very well, she would take that place. I did not know what delicious dinners she could prepare. It ended in my promising to talk it over with my housemate, and as Miss Nelson was enchanted with the prospect, Francine came to us.

Then began our real comfort. Francine attended to everything. She went to market, and haggled so successfully that our expenses were lessened, while she cooked us the most delicious meals. She took all responsibility off my shoulders, leaving me free to devote myself to my studies.

It was an odd life that I led; that of a young student, after these years of singing in large theaters. In spite of my savings, my supply of money was none too large; my income alone would not have sufficed, and sometimes I wondered if I were not very foolish, and half determined to go to Milan, eat humble pie for Fano, and ask him to get me an engagement.

At a critical time, I met the great French baritone with whom I had sung in South America and Italy. He came into a restaurant where I was lunching, and as soon as he caught sight of me, hurried to join me. It was an event now for me to meet an acquaintance, and we chatted gaily. He was on his way to Brussels for some special performances, and had just returned from Russia. Suddenly he interrupted himself to remark on the improvement in my French, and almost before I realized, I was telling him of my present life.

"Mademoiselle, I think you are very sensible," he

remarked. "Of course you sing very well, but it is true that you can develop much along the lines you have indicated. And I do not say this because I am a Frenchman, but success in Paris, which I believe can easily be yours in the near future, will mean more for your career than perhaps you now realize. I think it is admitted that we French lead the world in art, although we have not, as a rule, the voices of Italians."

He urged me to sing in France before leaving.

"We artists must all consider money," he laughed. "You can make much more in other countries. Why, they paid me almost three times as much in South America as I am to receive in Brussels. But it will mean much for you to have French successes. Try to have some appearances. Your teacher, Capelle, can doubtless arrange it for you."

When we parted after luncheon, I felt both encouraged and elated.

Capelle did arrange. One day when I came for my lesson, there was a strange Frenchman in the studio. Capelle introduced him, and added that he wished to hear me sing. I remember that I sang the waltz from "Romeo et Juliette," upon which I had been working, and several other arias. There followed a long conversation between the two men, and finally the stranger made me an offer for the month of June, to sing eight times in "Carmen," "Romeo et Juliette," and a third opera to be selected later. The amount offered me for the entire engagement was less than I had often received for a single performance. I almost refused at once, but Capelle quickly interrupted, and

told the other that *Mademoiselle* would notify him of her decision the following day.

When we were alone, Capelle told me that he understood perfectly that the offer surprised me; that I must not consider the financial side, but look upon the fee merely as my expenses. I asked him of what possible advantage to me it could be to sing in so small a city, and was surprised to learn that it might prove of very considerable advantage.

Finally I told him that I would leave it to him, and it was then decided that I accept.

To my surprise, the third opera chosen was "Cavalleria Rusticana." I thought of Starnio. This was indeed entering the dramatic field. Capelle urged me to sing the rôle, and I threw myself into it with all my energy, while I worked harder than ever to perfect my French diction. The music suited me better than I had anticipated, and Capelle was quite enthusiastic. At the end of May I left Paris for Nantes.

I was well received. I had quite an ovation as *Juliette,* which I sang three times; the local papers treated me well, and several Paris papers had paragraphs about me. But what pleased me most, what repaid me for my hard work, were two comments: one that my French was so perfect that despite my Italian name, I was evidently of French extraction; the other that as *Santuzza,* I proclaimed myself unmistakably a *tragédienne,* my histrionic ability being far superior to that of the usual opera singer. This in France meant much to me.

Capelle was delighted. He was leaving Paris the week after my return for Deauville, where he had a

villa. Thither I followed him, found board with a French family, and continued working with him. Evidently he was silently occupying himself with my affairs, for in September I was again engaged for a season, this time in Rouen, where a company of rather insignificant singers, of whom I was easily the star, presented "Faust," "Le Cid," and "Carmen." Before I finished this engagement, an agent offered me eight performances in the *Théâtre de la Monnaie,* Brussels, and this, I knew, marked a real advance in my French career. I signed the contract, and thought it of sufficient importance to communicate it to Fano, and also inclosed two good notices from the Rouen papers. He replied with a brief, contemptuous note, to the effect that when I was "tired of singing for fifty francs a night" (which of course was pure invention), I could "come to Milan," always provided that I had not "ruined my voice in the meantime," and he would "try to do something" for me.

I liked Brussels. I thoroughly enjoyed my performances there, with artists, many of them young, and who, if not distinguished yet, sang with a perfection of ensemble, with an enthusiasm to which I had not been accustomed. I pleased the public, and they showed that I did. At one performance, who should appear but my old acquaintance, the Roumanian tenor. A few days later, as I entered the theater for a rehearsal, I met him face to face. We stopped and chatted; he had heard me sing, and congratulated me. I complimented him. Then, just as he was turning away, he called back:

"Oh, I suppose you know that Captain von Zolter is married?"

For one instant, my heart almost stopped beating, but these years had taught me much. In a tone whose indifference surprised me, as it evidently did him, I repeated blankly:

"Captain von Zolter?"

He stared at me.

"Why, yes, Captain von Zolter, the good-looking young Austrian officer with whom you went about so much that winter in Vienna."

I frowned, as though trying to recall the name, then:

"Oh, yes, I remember now. One sees so many people, and it is so long ago, four, five, how many years? Married, you say? No, I do not remember hearing of it, but then I have traveled so constantly."

He looked disappointed, but remarked that he had seen him with his wife at the opera in Vienna the previous summer, and added with malice:

"A very pretty woman, she looks a mere girl."

I made some reply and we parted. There was nothing really unexpected in this news. For three years now I had schooled myself to hear it some day, but none the less it gave me a pang. At that moment the knowledge of my artistic progress, of my successes were but poor compensation for what I had lost. But I was less bitter now. Time, the great consoler, had not only effected such a partial cure that sometimes entire weeks passed during which I never thought of Carl, but had also helped me to realize that even under the most favorable circumstances my life with him would probably not have been happy.

The snubs and slights which as his wife I should have experienced, the difficulties of the position, were plainer to me now than formerly. To his family and friends I should have seemed the veriest nobody, without even the gilded coating which sometimes makes such American pills tolerable to European aristocratic circles. And the more I learned of these circles, the less possible did I believe that it would ever be for me to adapt myself to them. I had an intolerance of narrow conventionalities, of rigid etiquette, none the less I had an aversion for what many artists considered but the ordinary mode of life. I could not believe Carl at heart other than the conventional aristocrat, reserving for himself the liberty of making such little excursions into the artistic world as he might choose, but with no thought of such for his wife. None the less, it was long before I could think of his marriage save with pain.

The following winter in Paris brought me an engagement for three performances at the Opera, where, with a very poor chorus, an admirable ballet, insignificant artists, save for a fine young basso, and a tenor whose vocal deficiencies were atoned for by his art, I sang *Juliette, Marguerite,* and the *Infanta.* Nothing came of this engagement save some good notices, the receipt of impassioned love-letters from utter strangers, and evasive assurances from several gentlemen connected with the management that they hoped to have me sing there again in the near future. I was rather surprised not to be offered a contract, but Capelle assured me that they already had more singers than they could use.

Still later came an engagement, again for three performances, at the *Opéra Comique,* where I found a much better ensemble. Here, too, I had decided success, but when I went to a performance to hear a soprano who had recently signed a contract with that theater for several years, I was amazed to discover that while she was a beautiful, statuesque woman, her voice was barely mediocre, of such light quality that it was frequently drowned out by the orchestra.

The morning after my third performance, the manager of the theater offered me a contract for several years, two or three, I have forgotten, because it made little impression upon me, after he mentioned the salary. This was so ridiculously small that I will not even name it, for I doubt if it would be believed. So small was it that I almost doubted my ears, and asked him to repeat. He did so readily enough, and I laughed.

"Why, Monsieur, I could not even live on such a sum, let alone pay for my costumes."

He replied with the utmost *sang-froid:*

"But, Mademoiselle, that is not to be expected. With Mademoiselle's beauty and charm, she need be under no apprehensions. That will easily adjust itself."

This was the first time that such a brutally outspoken remark had been made to me. I thought of Carl, and of what he had said years before. Then, although I felt that my face was crimson, I replied proudly that further discussion of a contract was unnecessary, and without the slightest sign of discomposure, the gentleman "regretted" and took his leave.

I told Capelle of this offer, merely adding that I

had not accepted it, but he remarked in a matter-of-fact way:

"No, I hardly thought that you would do so if you understood. I doubted if you would accept what are practically the conditions of real success there, unless one has sufficient private income to live on with the salary offered."

Then came an offer, quite out of a clear sky, for the coming season at Covent Garden, from the manager in person. He was in Paris, and had, he told me, heard me sing both during my recent engagement at the *Opéra Comique* and in Brussels.

Here, again, the terms were not remarkable—I began to wonder if I were fated to sing for small salaries for the rest of my career—but they were better financially than I had received since my American season. I hesitated, and finally he made a very slight increase in the offer. I was tempted. There was nothing else in prospect, and it was too late for Fano to secure anything for me, even if I made my peace with him, before the following autumn. I had never been in England, and the thought of going there interested me. The manager grew almost urgent. We discussed repertoire, and mine was extensive enough for anyone. I was on the point of signing, when a sudden inspiration, born of the wisdom I had learned in America, made me ask:

"What other sopranos are to be in the company?"

He named a dramatic soprano whom I knew by name, a woman less remarkable for her art than for the volume of her voice, two or three unfamiliar names, young artists, he told me, the famous interpreter of

Carmen, and finally, Mme. Alba, the high-priced soprano who had been in the New York company.

"I hardly see that you need me, Mr. Pott," I remarked.

He looked surprised.

"You have Mme. Alba," I continued, "and she sings all of my rôles, I believe." (I almost smiled as I thought what would have been her expression had she heard this remark. She had scarcely noticed me on the rare occasions when we met in the theater in New York.) The manager replied politely that he did not think we need conflict.

"I do not intend that we shall, Mr. Pott," I replied politely but firmly. "But since Mme. Alba has doubtless reserved certain rôles as hers exclusively, I should require others stipulated as mine."

He objected; it was never done. She had reserved the right to first appearances in certain rôles, but that was exceptional, etc. I persisted, and finally, after much argument, and only when I remarked that it seemed useless to discuss the subject longer, was an understanding reached. I was assured the first two appearances as *Gilda* and *Micaela,* while given to me outright was *Leonora,* a rôle that I had never sung, although I had studied it for New York. The interview lasted for nearly two hours, and the weary manager departed with a sigh of relief. I called Francine, and we held a council over the costumes which we hauled out from the trunks where they had for so long reposed.

Francine and I were in the midst of this, when my housemate came in, and told me that she was return-

ing to America shortly. We gave up the flat, and while Francine and Miss Nelson attended to final arrangements, I made a hasty trip to Milan.

I saw Fano, greeted him as though we had never differed, and told him that I had come to see what he could do for me for the coming season, after the Covent Garden engagement.

"What are you singing there?" he asked. *"Brünnhilde,* or by chance *Ortrud?"*

"Don't be absurd, Fano," I laughed. "I am singing *Gilda, Micaela, Leonora,* perhaps *Nedda."*

"Alba will sing *Gilda* if they give 'Rigoletto,' and you'll have no chance, with her there, of *Lucia."*

"Thank goodness, no! I've had enough of *Lucia* for a long time."

"Or even *Marguerite,"* he continued, ignoring my interruption.

"But *Gilda* and *Micaela* are expressly stipulated for in my contract. No one else can sing them until I have sung them at least twice," I proudly informed him.

He looked surprised.

"You really have seen to that?"

"I have. I am learning, I assure you."

He quite unbent, although as he still expressed doubts as to my voice, I insisted that he must and should hear me sing. The next day I sang for him the *Bird Song* from "I Pagliacci," then being sung all over Italy; I sang the *Jewel Song,* and finally, at his request, the *Caro Nome.* He listened without a word, and when I had finished, he shook my hand.

"You were right," he cried, "and I was wrong. You have improved wonderfully, and have had the good

sense to keep your Italian method. Yes, your style has broadened, your voice has grown. I can almost believe that you might sing *Santuzza* well, as I have heard that you did."

He made me dine with him and "talk matters over."

Before I left for Paris, we had come to an excellent understanding, and he was most encouraging as to what he could probably do for me for the coming autumn.

CHAPTER XV

AT COVENT GARDEN

My first visit to England! In spite of the fact that on that June morning, as we sighted the white cliffs of Dover, the sky was overcast, the air distinctly chilly, it none the less made a home-like impression. A change indeed from the Italy I had left the week before, or even Paris, which had been warm and sunshiny. The boat train rolled through a country which seemed to me like one great garden, so green, with such charming flowers. London was very gray, smoky, dingy, but I liked it none the less.

The manager had recommended a hotel, and Francine and I went there at once. It was comfortable, and I liked the boxes filled with flowers on every window-sill, liked the homey look of the rooms.

I found the management of the opera house most courteous. The theater itself made an odd impression on me when I first saw it in the morning, with a large market in full rush of business close to it. The interior, too, by daylight was dingy, but at night, filled with an audience in evening dress, the women in the boxes wearing magnificent jewels, the sight was sufficiently imposing.

There was an excellent orchestra, the conductor was none other than Mantinelli, who had been at the

Metropolitan Opera House during my season there, and he greeted me affably.

During my first week in London, I met the *Maestro* of my Madrid days. He greeted me so effusively that I could not but return his greeting. I heard with some satisfaction that he had been in England for a month, trying to get a post as assistant conductor. My informant hinted darkly at some terrible scandal which had kept him out of good contracts, but I asked no questions. Still, I was glad that he did not obtain the post, for it might have fallen to my lot to sing under his baton, and who could say whether he might not have tried to interfere with my success?

I had not been long in London before I learned that the *diva* Alba was very powerful in the theater and with its management. At first I think she considered me too insignificant to be noticed, but after my first successes I heard of little remarks which she made about me, and of her determination that I should have no rôle of which she could possibly deprive me. It was, I feel sure, thanks to her that I had no chance to sing *Nedda,* and that on the first evening that she sang it I was unexpectedly cast for *Santuzza,* against my wishes. Undoubtedly she believed that I should be overshadowed by herself, and that one who, as she had taken pains to announce, sang the lightest of *coloratura* music, could hardly be more than passable as the impassioned *Santuzza.* She was mistaken.

The Italian colony turned out in full force to hear me, and the English portion of the audience joined in their applause. I had a great success, and the papers next day, while some of them doubted the suit-

ability of my voice to the rôle, one and all praised my interpretation, some even commending "the praiseworthy desire on the part of the youthful soprano to broaden her art, which those who sing the *genre* of music in which Mademoiselle Della Rocca has won her reputation, are seldom prone to display."

In *Gilda* and *Leonora* I had two rôles which greatly pleased the public. This public at first I thought cold, but it seemed to take me to its heart before the close of the season, so that I felt that I was singing for friends. On my first appearance, while I had unusual success for a Covent Garden début, there had been comments which both surprised and amused me.

My agility was "good, but hardly equal to that of Alba," although my acting was "perhaps superior." If it had not been, I would have retired from the stage in disgust. My singing was pronounced artistic, "with little of the explosive vehemence of many Italian singers." Again I wondered, for I did not consider that an Italian trait. They commended me for not "tearing passion to tatters," in my dramatic moments, while yet giving a decidedly interesting performance. As the season wore on, the comments became more enthusiastic, and towards its close I was honored by being included in a performance "commanded" to take place at Windsor Castle, before the Queen.

On this occasion, the program was made up of acts from several operas. I sang in the Tower Scene from "Il Trovatore" with a young Italian tenor. We were all presented to Her Majesty, who was very gracious, complimented me warmly, and presented me with a pretty brooch.

There was a new and agreeable feature to my life in London. At the time, there were several prominent Italian musicians domiciled there as teachers. These hastened to call on me, and compliment me almost as a compatriot, on my début. Two of them were married, one to an Englishwoman, and I was invited to their homes. Other invitations followed, where I met not only the better class of Italian professionals, but English men and women, Bohemians in the nicer sense of the word, or of the upper class. I found that in England artists, if at all possible in their life and manners, are considered welcome additions to many circles, and quite courted. I made pleasant acquaintances, some of whom became friends.

I was engaged, through the opera management, for several musicales given in beautiful homes by members of the fashionable set, and one in a superb old house, by a duchess, bearing one of the oldest names in England. On the walls of the picture gallery in which this concert was held, hung paintings by famous artists; there were many beautiful *objets d'art.* The duchess was a delightfully unaffected woman. Many of the guests were presented to me, and showed a cordiality which was delightful.

Altogether I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in London, and realized as well that I had made no mistake in accepting the contract, since I had now become known to the British public, which I was told, and later learned for myself from experience, never forgets those whom it once likes. I also made up my mind that when next I sang in Covent Garden the terms should be different. Accordingly when I was offered a con-

tract for the following season similar to the one I had signed, I refused it very politely. The management equally politely regretted that they could not see their way to accepting my terms. We parted amicably. My mind was made up. I had sacrificed much for my art during the past three years. Now I intended to be repaid financially. Much as I liked England, better South America than to sing again for a mere pittance.

Again I moved from one city to another, remaining such a short time in each that I seemed to pass merely from hotel to theater, then off again.

There was none of the pleasant social life that I had so enjoyed in England; no possibility of agreeable little week-end trips, with always my Sundays to myself. Diversions now consisted either in going to the opera when not singing, or in little card parties among the artists, meeting in each other's rooms. I cared little for cards, nor did the late hours—they often played until three and four o'clock in the morning—suit my tastes, so more and more I kept to myself, reading, or studying my neglected German.

Three gala performances in Florence were the pleasantest of that season. I was fêted as almost a native; not socially, of course, but publicly. Maria came to see me, bringing two chubby children, and was affectionately interested in all that I told her about my life. The theater was crowded each time that I sang; I was tendered a banquet, at which the Mayor presided. My health was drunk, and many flowery compliments paid her "whom Florence is delighted to claim as an adopted daughter." It was all very agreeable

after the years in which I had had so little of this sort of thing.

A telegram from Fano the day after the banquet cut short my stay in Florence. I must come to Milan to discuss a contract for St. Petersburg. I refused at a slight increase of salary another offer from Covent Garden, which a few weeks earlier I should undoubtedly have accepted. The St. Petersburg engagement offered me more than twice as much, and held for me the additional inducement and interest of a visit to a strange country.

I thoroughly enjoyed my Russian season. The Russian public is a delightful one to sing for. I liked my colleagues. I had not only artistic success, but might have had quite a different kind as well, for I returned three presents of magnificent jewelry, which were but advance suggestions of what I might expect, were I to smile upon the donors.

August found me in Switzerland, and here I studied the rôle of *Mimi,* in Puccini's new and highly successful opera of "La Bohême." I had met him when he was a struggling young composer, and it was pleasant now to make the acquaintance of so sparkling, so melodious a work. Positively the embodiment of youth, it has always seemed to me, with an exuberance of melody which has hardly been equaled in his later works. I went over the rôle with him in the autumn, and he declared that I had caught his very idea.

During the preceding winter I assisted at what might be called the launching of a young artist who was destined to become eminent. The first performance of a new opera by Giordano, "Andrea Chénier,"

was being prepared for at La Scala. I was in Milan for a week immediately preceding the performance. Of course everyone was deeply interested in it, and we professionals attended the rehearsals. At the first of these I heard a young baritone in the important rôle of *Carlo Gerard.* I thought his voice beautiful, so smooth and velvety, and asked Fano, who was with me, who he was.

"His name is Sammarco. He is very young," was the reply, "and either extremely lucky or just the reverse, according as things turn out, to appear so soon in this theater, for he has sung, I understand, in but one other."

"How did he happen to be engaged?" I asked, surprised, for seldom does such a beginner appear in La Scala.

"It is Santonio's doing," shrugged Fano, mentioning a music publisher, Ricardo's greatest rival. "Santonio heard the baritone during his first engagement, and declared that he was made for the rôle of *Gérard.* He insisted that it be given him, and when the management protested that it was too great a risk to engage an unknown young singer for so important a rôle, Santonio declared that either Sammarco should sing it, or the opera, of which he is the publisher, should not be given. In the end Santonio had his way. However, if young Sammarco does not make a success, he may well wish that Santonio had never heard him. A failure in La Scala would mean years of waiting for another chance."

A day or two later I met the young artist. I liked him at once. He was serious, modest, and alluded

frankly to the ordeal which he knew lay before him. I was delighted that not only was the opera a great success, but also that the young artist came in for a large share of the applause, was warmly praised next day by the press, and might consider himself well started on the path of artistic reputation. Fano told me on my return from Russia that Sammarco had received an excellent contract after his La Scala success, and that his future was very promising.

CHAPTER XVI

THE INDEFATIGABLE PRESS AGENT

And now the entries in my diaries grow briefer and briefer. I was too busy or indifferent to make long records, and I find little save names of cities, and of rôles sung.

After my Russian season, I refused an offer to go to New York in January, and sing under a new management. I was later offered, and accepted, with substantially increased terms, a contract for Covent Garden in the spring, with the privilege of renewal for two seasons by the management.

I had even more success than before in London. When a gala performance was arranged, I returned to my early rôle, and insisted upon singing the Mad Scene from *Lucia,* in which I amazed the critics, and astonished some of my warmest admirers. I had a number of private engagements, and the management did not hesitate to renew my contract.

The following winter I sang at La Scala, and early in the spring was engaged for some *gast* appearances in Berlin, Dresden, Buda Pesth and Vienna. Almost I refused the last suggested, but thought better of my weakness. Not once did I see Carl, yet was reminded

of his probable nearness by one feature of my stay for which it seemed that he must be responsible. At each of my appearances, when I entered my dressing-room I found magnificent flowers awaiting me, with no card or name attached, but one night, in the very heart of an exquisite bunch of roses, was a tiny bunch of forget-me-nots. He made no other sign, and I was relieved to find that the flowers left me cold.

A noticeably pleasant feature of my visit to Vienna was the renewal of my friendship with Waldberger and his wife. He was now director at the Opera, and I sang my rôles under his baton. I paid two visits to the home of this agreeable couple, and met several former acquaintances.

More London successes—I now felt quite at home there—more wanderings. Seasons in Madrid, Barcelona, etc. It was along about this time that I acquired the rôle of *La Tosca,* which became one of my most successful creations. After the three seasons at Covent Garden, I was again offered a new contract, but only a week before I had made other arrangements.

I had taken a furnished house that season, and was playing at having a home. One afternoon, Fano appeared unexpectedly; we discussed plans, but he seemed preoccupied.

Two days later his manner was explained. He brought with him none other than Mr. Blank of my New York days. The latter came to offer me a three years' contract. I was about to refuse, when he cut me short by naming the terms, which so amazed me that I paused. Fano suggested that Mr. Blank give me until the following day to think the offer over, and the

two left together. Half an hour later, Fano came back, and at dinner we discussed the matter. The financial side was such that I could hardly afford to refuse. It was for more money than I had yet been offered.

With Fano's assistance various clauses were inserted, assuring me certain rôles. My début was carefully provided for; it was to take place on the opening night of the New York season.

Blank came again the next day, and eventually I signed the contract. I heard that he openly felicitated himself upon having secured me, pronouncing me the reigning favorite of Covent Garden, and my foreign successes had lost nothing in Fano's telling.

Then I signed for a season at Buenos Aires, at a still larger fee. Since this latter would follow the New York season, I was unable to return to Covent Garden.

The day after the announcement of my engagement for New York appeared in the London papers, presumably inserted by Blank, I received an odd note.

Francine brought it to me with my breakfast, and also some unwelcome news. She was to be married to a Frenchman, who had a prosperous little restaurant in London, and so could remain with me only until the end of the season. Francine seemed to have made all necessary investigations into the standing and character of her *fiancé,* and there was nothing for me to do but bestow my blessing and resign myself to her loss, which I did with a heavy heart.

I had been so absorbed in her news that only when she left the room did I open the note, which she had

placed on my tray for some reason, instead of leaving it for the secretary who came to me each morning.

A typewritten note announced that one James Forbes, quite unknown to me, desired an appointment on a matter of business which he believed would be of advantage to both. Such letters were frequent enough, whether suggestions for investments, requests that I finance some young student, or any of the hundreds of requests which all successful artists know. I should probably have thrown the note away had he not added "connected with your coming visit to America." As he stated that he would call that afternoon, hoping to find me at liberty, I was sufficiently curious to decide to see him.

He called at the hour he had set. I decided that he was an American, well-dressed, with a bright, rather sharp face and an agreeable manner. He informed me that he spoke French and German, and proceeded to recommend himself as secretary and press agent.

"I have never employed a press agent in my life," I laughed.

"No, Madame, I am well aware of that," he gravely remarked.

I stared at him, and continued:

"Hence I do not see the necessity for engaging one now, while I hardly think I need the exclusive services of a secretary. Perhaps a few hours a day——"

"Madame, were you satisfied with your former New York season?" he interrupted.

I was annoyed. Even now I did not like to recall that season, with its disappointments, its humiliations, and despite my fine contract, I still felt some misgivings

about my return to New York. But while I hesitated what reply to make, he continued:

"Madame, had you been properly advertised, been properly kept before the public, everything would, I assure you, have been different. You could not possibly have been introduced to New York in a more unfortunate manner."

"I hardly see what I could have done," I remarked. "The mistake lay in ever signing such a contract. I was inexperienced in business——"

"Yes, yes, Madame, but that was not all," he again interrupted, and delivered a brief lecture upon the merits of advertising, the extent to which success in America depended upon advertising, for the artist as well as the business man, always provided that it was discreetly done. He wound up with a statement of his own talents in this line in a frank manner, quite as though stating a self-evident fact, and finally mentioned some ten or a dozen artists who had, he declared, availed themselves from time to time of his services. Most of the names I had heard, but at one of them I exclaimed. She was a famous opera singer whose success in America had been tremendous.

"Do you mean to say that you were her press agent?" I cried, incredulous.

For answer he produced a small packet of letters from his breast pocket, and after turning them over, handed me one from the artist in question, stating that it gave her great pleasure to recommend Mr. James Forbes to anyone requiring the services of a very clever publicity agent, and expressing her complete satisfaction with such services as he had for more than two

years rendered her. I was indeed surprised. I had hitherto believed that press agents were employed solely by the managers of theaters, to give out information to the press, and thus insure its accuracy.

"Oh dear, no!" replied Mr. Forbes, when I made a remark to this effect. "The theater press agents are far too busy with the general affairs of the theaters to look after artists individually. Besides, how could they? They cannot exploit one soprano, for instance, at the expense of all the other sopranos in the company."

"And is that what you would propose to do?" I asked.

"Certainly," was the unabashed reply.

"But why was Mme. Normana—that is not the real name—willing to part with you?"

"She has a three years' contract in Germany, and believes that press agents are not needed in that country, although personally I doubt that. I have promised to see that her name is kept before the public at home by little items telling of her success, etc., but that will not interfere in any way with my doing my best possible work for you if you decide to engage me."

Then he continued to tell me, talking very fast as though to guard against interruptions, while I listened amused, interested in spite of myself, some of the things that he could do for me, some of the advantages which would be mine, etc. Finally he urged me to give him a trial. "Only engage me until, let us say, the first of January, and if you do not think my services valuable then I will not ask you to retain me."

I sent him away promising to think the matter over,

and told him that he might call a few days later. I found that in thinking it over I was not averse to engaging him. I remembered distinctly that I had felt that something was wrong before, and although I still believed that the fault lay solely with the contract I had signed, yet why not see what this urgent young man could do for me, since it was evident that operatic matters as well as artists were managed in a different way on the other side of the Atlantic? The salary he asked was not exorbitant, and with a strange maid perhaps it might be well to have someone who would attend to my luggage in traveling, etc.

After some further discussion I engaged him. His active duties were to begin in America, but I agreed to pay him a certain sum for what he called preliminaries. He then demanded photographs, newspaper notices, programs, in quantities which amazed me, and came and spent hours poring over my various scrap-books and impersonal diaries, since I did not care to let these pass out of my possession. I came into the room one morning while he was thus occupied, and he looked up from intent scrutiny of several printed items.

"Madame, is it possible that you know the Duchess of Y. personally?"

I glanced at the page he had been reading. On it was a small paragraph from a newspaper, pasted there by my conscientious secretary, which set forth the fact that among the guests for the week-end at Y. Towers was Mademoiselle Della Rocca, of Covent Garden. Another item told of my visit to Ascot in a party which included two women belonging to the most fashionable

set in London. He pointed to this, and asked in an awestruck tone:

"And you know these also?"

I leaned over his shoulder to look.

"Certainly I know them," I replied tartly. "Is there anything so extraordinary in that?"

He ignored my tone if indeed he noticed it.

"Then, Madame" (I was always "Madame" to Forbes. I presume that he thought the title more impressive), "I beg you to ask them at once, before they have left London for the summer, when it might be difficult to reach them, to give you letters of introduction to Mrs. Q., Mrs. Y., Miss Z.," and he named various women, wealthy Americans, who were all quite regular yearly visitors to England, particularly to London for the season.

I was at first too amazed to answer, then assured him that I would not dream of doing anything of the sort. Whereupon he took to entreaties. I did not know, I could not realize how valuable such letters would be to me, etc., etc., until I half thought the man was mad.

"Why should I do such a thing even if I were willing?" I finally demanded. "I am going to New York to sing, not to meet society women, who can, I am sure, dispense with my acquaintance quite as easily as I can with theirs. I have no desire, no intention of forcing my acquaintance upon them."

He almost wailed.

"Is it possible that you do not understand? Was ever anyone so blind?" he cried tragically. "Do you

not know, my dear Madame, that a letter of introduction to these ladies from the Duchess of Y., the Countess of G., and Mrs. Donald will have them at your feet, literally at your feet?"

"But if I do not wish them there?" I laughed, but he was in no mood for jesting.

"Come now," I resumed, taking pity on his despairing expression, "of what possible advantage could it be to my New York season were I to meet all these ladies? Of what professional advantage, understand? I am not speaking of the possibility of being invited to one or two formal receptions."

He cast his eyes up to the ceiling as though despairing of my reason, then patiently explained.

"Merely to meet them, no, possibly that would be quite useless. To have letters of introduction to them from the ladies mentioned here," and he tapped the open page of the scrap-book, "would mean everything! Everything! They would seek you out, entertain you." Then as I shrugged my shoulders at this prospect, which truth to tell did not seem alluring, he cried: "Do you not realize that these American women are all box holders in the Metropolitan Opera House, or their husbands are? It is all the same. And the husband of Mrs. Q. is also one of the most active members of the Board of Directors."

"Hm! I see. But I could not possibly ask the Duchess of Y. or any of the ladies you have mentioned for introductions to their American friends. I should not think of doing so."

He tried further persuasion in vain, then after a moment of disappointed silence, his face brightened.

"But if they were to offer them? You would not decline them?"

Again I stared at him.

"What are you planning, Mr. Forbes? I will not have these ladies annoyed——"

"No, no, I promise you that nothing shall be done that could reflect on you in the least. You will not be asking, they will offer." He seized his hat and left the house before I could protest further. I wrote him quite a sharp letter that night, warning him that I refused to have any of my English friends bothered to give me letters of introduction to anyone, and that I should be seriously annoyed if they were asked in my name for such letters. He neither answered my letter nor appeared for several days. Meanwhile came a courteous note from the secretary of the duchess, informing me that Her Grace had learned with regret of my decision not to return to London the following season, as she had looked forward to seeing me again then. She was leaving almost immediately for the Continent, and learning that I was to be in New York the following winter, she had directed that the enclosed letters of introduction be sent me, thinking that I might find it pleasant to have some acquaintances there. The enclosures were letters to three American women whom I knew belonged to the fashionable set in New York. One of these had been named by Forbes as a desirable addition to my acquaintances. Several other letters followed, two from a titled lady whose name had not been mentioned during our conversation. When Forbes finally made his appearance, with a triumphant expression which he could ill conceal, I asked

him sternly if he had disregarded my positive instructions. He assured me that he had not written a single letter asking for one of these introductions, and refused to explain further, since he said if I did not know I could not tell. I never learned what his exact procedure had been, for of course he instigated the whole business. It was done, and I may add here that Forbes' expectations were later fully realized, to my surprise and amusement.

About the middle of October I sailed for New York, accompanied by my new maid, and was met before going on board the ship by Forbes, alert as ever. He had secured me excellent accommodations; I was seated at the captain's right hand, my steamer chair was ready for me in one of the most sheltered parts of the deck, and I was soon aware that I was an object of interest to the other passengers. This, too, was Forbes' doing. When I appeared on deck, no matter at what hour, or from what direction, almost invariably he appeared at my side with: "Does Madame wish this? Does Madame wish that? An extra rug? A pillow? Steward, a cup of bouillon for Madame." Or my maid was dispatched on some errand, and all this was done in such a manner that attention was sure to be attracted. I was both annoyed and amused. Remonstrances were quite useless. He would give me a reproachful glance, and assure me that he was merely taking care of my interests, or look pained and make no reply. People occasionally stopped beside my chair, and asked questions, harmless enough, about my career, my nationality, whether I was glad to be returning to America, and Forbes had impressed upon

me the urgent necessity of assuring everyone that I was overjoyed; it would be fatal to do otherwise, he said. After a few questions he would gently but firmly remove these questioners. "Madame must not talk any longer; the sea air," or "Madame has a headache," something that I never had in my life.

Then the landing. He made me a conspicuous figure. I could not help myself. He put words in my mouth, he hovered at my side when a bevy of reporters met us on the dock. He told them things that had never happened to me, interspersed with a few facts; I was snapshotted half a dozen times, and he beamed with satisfaction at the columns that appeared the following day in the papers. After we were settled in an expensive hotel, which he assured me that my position demanded, he displayed with pride a huge book quite filled with clippings, stories, anecdotes, pictures, which had appeared in papers and magazines during the summer months and before my arrival, and which had been collected by his orders.

My agreement with him had been for a fixed salary, and the payment of certain expenses. In time I came to realize that his position with me brought him in various extra moneys, commissions, etc. For instance, a certain manufacturer of cold cream paid him a tidy sum, so I heard, for the letter of recommendation which Forbes persuaded me to sign as another "good bit of advertising." But as this was never at my expense, I did not begrudge it to him. He really, once his methods were accepted, was a great convenience. He arranged such interviews with newspaper or magazine writers as it seemed desirable to give—I left that

entirely to him—and the others he supplied with such information, pictures, anecdotes, etc., that they were content without an actual personal meeting. There were columns about me in the newspapers, long articles in magazines of whose names I had hitherto been ignorant, as well as in others which had been familiar to me for years.

What remarkable stories some of these were! To read many of them it would be thought that not only was I the most famous of women, but also a lifetime would barely suffice to contain all the marvelous adventures, the hairbreadth escapes, etc., which had fallen to my lot. As for friends, I numbered almost all the crowned heads of Europe, princes and princesses of the blood royal, besides discoverers, explorers, scientists, painters, artists of every kind and nationality, among my circle of intimates.

I often blushed to think what some of these personages would say did any of these articles ever chance to come to their knowledge. I remonstrated with Forbes, but it was useless. For some of the most flamboyant inventions he declared that he was not responsible, that he had given out no such information. Over others he laughed, and assured me that it was all splendid advertising, for if the worst came to the worst, he denied the statements in the newspapers, and that meant more space devoted to me. Apparently he knew what he was talking about, for other artists of the company sometimes asked me enviously how I managed to be so continuously in the public eye, and Forbes instructed me to reply that it was because I knew so many journalists.

When interest in interviews flagged, there began a series of articles over my signature; travel articles, describing my experiences both real and merely "founded on fact," as Forbes styled them; articles in musical journals, discussing musical topics, giving advice to young singers, to American girls going abroad to study; how I learned my rôles, etc.

Forbes questioned me to get the facts, for his articles were accurate whenever possible; then he wrote them, I read them over, approved or corrected them, and signed my name.

I recommended toilet preparations, pianos, photographers, automobiles; I visited fairs. I sent dolls dressed as myself in various rôles in my repertoire, in short I did all the things that a popular prima donna in America is supposed to do.

One winter I "consented" to act as judge during an entire afternoon for a sensational newspaper, to decide which of numerous applicants had the best voice, and was accordingly entitled to the "free scholarship" which the paper proposed to award. This brought me many columns in that particular paper—the others were scornfully silent—and horrible woodcuts of me hearing the applicants. There were more than twenty of these, selected from hundreds of others, and I have often wondered whether the one I selected, a little Polish girl with a really lovely voice, ever received the instruction.

It was Forbes who received the journalists for whom he made appointments at which he wished me to be present. Always at the proper moment, with no care on my part, refreshments would appear; tea and cakes

for the women, save when a few boldly announced their preferences for stronger beverages, various drinks and cigars for the men. Forbes arranged certain little dinners and suppers which were not the purely social affairs that they appeared to be. Certainly the press treated me very well indeed.

Out of all the mass of stories about me during these American seasons, I will mention but one which appeared at Thanksgiving time in a widely read paper, describing a certain Thanksgiving day of *mine* (?)

I was, so ran this tale, in "the heart of Russia"—just where, I wonder!—filling an engagement, when I met "a well-known New England millionaire, whose name is a household word." To him I deplored the years that had passed since I had enjoyed a real American Thanksgiving dinner. The millionaire's sympathies were aroused, his patriotism stirred, and he assured me that this year I should have one. He cabled to his New England model farm, and two days before Thanksgiving a huge box arrived for me. (Presumably I was still in "the heart of Russia.")

The box contained besides the regulation turkeys (arriving fresh!) several kinds of pies, and a plum pudding. There was a smaller box filled with genuine New England cranberries, carefully packed in cotton wool and tissue paper. Thus, being a fine cook myself, I was able to have a real Thanksgiving dinner, although so many thousands of miles from home.

This was a popular story, and with a picture of me, my house dress covered by a huge apron, my sleeves rolled up, was widely copied. I do not know how

Forbes secured the photograph; I never posed for it, that is certain. He must have used someone else for the figure, and substituted my head for hers. He was quite equal to that.

Sometimes I rebelled, and declared that this was circus advertising, unworthy of an artist, but he was ready with arguments in its defense, and when one day a concert manager congratulated me upon the clever press work that was being done for me, I gave up objecting. If all this was supposed to contribute to artistic success there was nothing more to be said.

Whether or not it did so contribute, there was no doubt of my success with both press and public. On the opening night of the season, when I appeared in my beautiful new costume as *Juliette,* I was vociferously applauded. The moment I set foot on the stage there was applause, carefully planned beforehand, I am sure, by Forbes, although he never admitted it, but the applause of the rest of the evening, even though his privately hired claque may have started it, came from all over the house. I was loaded down with flowers, too.

Every one of the women to whom I had letters promptly called upon me; be assured that Forbes saw that the letters accompanied by my card with my address were forwarded almost as soon as I arrived in New York. I was invited to dinners, receptions, week-end parties, and had indeed more invitations from these women and their friends than I could possibly accept. I was engaged for private musicales, fashionable charity concerts, etc., and my toilets were

invariably described at length in the society columns of the newspapers afterwards. I was treated with deference by the opera management as a star of great magnitude.

I owed the assignment of several important rôles not stipulated for in my contract to the direct interference in affairs of the theater of some of the box holders.

One opera in which I had been promised the first appearance as protagonist, although this promise was not in writing, was set for a certain evening during the season on which I was engaged to sing in the home of one of these gentlemen, whose wife had been unusually cordial in her relations with me. I protested to the management, only to be told very politely, even with an appearance of regret, that it was impossible to change the date of the first performance of the opera; other arrangements compelled, etc. I knew very well that behind all this lay the fixed determination of another soprano of the company to sing that rôle first. I also knew that she was backed by the powerful influence of the conductor, who although he dared not be openly disagreeable, was not friendly to me since a certain evening when I had given him plainly to understand that his amorous attentions were displeasing to me.

I was greatly annoyed. Suddenly I decided to appeal to my friend, and see what influence I might be able to bring to bear on the situation. I called her up on the telephone, found her at home, and made an appointment to see her. Then sitting in her cozy boudoir, over a cup of tea, I told her the facts. I

knew that she disliked the other soprano. She was indignant, as I had hoped she would be.

"But, my dear, we are all looking forward to hearing you in that rôle. Dear Lady Varder told me that she considered it your best. I will speak to my husband. Don't worry. We will see to that."

I went home wondering if she could possibly accomplish her purpose. I already knew something of the influence these women could exert when they chose. But would she choose this time? Would not her husband dissuade her from interfering?

A few days later the postponement of the opera was announced. It would be given two days later, and the title rôle would be sung by Mlle. Della Rocca, instead of Mme. So-and-So. Mr. Blank informed me of the change with a noncommittal expression; indeed I believe it was quite indifferent to him, but I saw by the look of concentrated hate on the other soprano's face when next we met in the theater and greeted each other with our usual effusive cordiality, that she felt that she had me to thank for her disappointment.

During my first season I sang a number of rôles. The general opinion of the critics was that I had made great progress in my art since I was heard there before, "almost a beginner." (Shades of La Scala!) There were one or two cavilers who insisted that my voice was not of sufficiently dramatic quality for my present rôles, notably for *Santuzza,* but these were a small minority. What made the greatest impression upon me was the frank comment of the eminent tenor, who was still a member of the company, that he would

not have believed it possible that I could have made such strides in my art in so comparatively short a time, and he assured me that in his opinion I should finish by singing the dramatic rôles exclusively.

At the end of my first New York season I sailed immediately for Buenos Aires, although I could have had a number of engagements in the United States had it not been for my contract with the southern city. As I was reëngaged for the two following seasons in New York I had almost no rest, barely six weeks in Europe at the close of the South American engagement, and these filled with appointments with dressmakers, milliners and costumers, for in New York an artist must have new costumes for each season.

The spring after my second New York season was filled with concert engagements, and when I sang the last of these, on a hot night in June, I was so utterly weary that I spent several entire days in my cabin on the voyage to Europe. Two months of rest made me quite myself again, however, and ready for my third winter in New York, but before that was over I had fully decided that I would not return again, at all events for the present. I had made a great deal of money, quite a large portion of which was well invested; the husbands of some of my New York acquaintances, as well as bachelor friends of my own, had given me "tips" for investments. Forbes, too, who had remained in my employ during these three years, had profited by them, so that when I announced my determination to return to Europe he informed me that he was going into business for himself as a concert manager. Laughingly he remarked that perhaps

he would one day manage a tour for me, and I wished him luck in what seemed to me a perilous venture. We parted in most friendly fashion. I never did make a tour under his management, but saw him a number of times on subsequent visits to America.

I returned to Europe with no definite plans. I appeared at a few large concerts in England and on the Continent, in the early autumn was engaged for some special appearances, then received a fine offer, a five years' contract from the Opera in Hamburg. The salary hardly compared with the amount that I might make if I remained free to accept whatever offered, still less if I returned to America, but I was so tired of traveling long distances, of the constant struggle to keep oneself always in the limelight, as is necessary if one wishes to continue to succeed in America, so weary of singing in half-rehearsed, hastily staged operas, that I scarcely hesitated to sign the contract. That Fano was disgusted it need hardly be said. He looked upon me as a gold mine from which he had hoped to extract large sums for such time as my voice should last, probably not more than five years longer, he assured me during one stormy interview, so all the more reason for me to make as much money as possible now. I was firm. We parted with friendly feelings on my side, suppressed wrath on his. He did indeed secure engagements for me after that, but he devoted his chief efforts to a young soprano whom he pronounced a marvel. Her career lasted barely five years, for although her voice was beautiful, poor child, she made her début after so brief a period of study that

it could not stand the strain of singing dramatic rôles in large theaters.

My five years in Hamburg were very peaceful. I had a home, a real home, to which many friends came. I numbered among these many interesting people, writers, musicians, painters, and some of the wealthy, cultivated upper middle class families. I sang in operas of which I had never heard before, as well as almost all my former repertoire, re-studied in German. Steadily I tended more and more toward dramatic rôles exclusively, singing the three *Brünnhilde,* and during the last year *Kundry* and *Isolde.* The latter I felt to be the supreme achievement of my career.

It was while filling one of my frequent engagements on leave of absence, in Vienna this time, that I saw Carl again. I had sung *Isolde* the evening before with enormous success; had had one of those triumphs which thrill the artist, and for a time compensate for many trials and disappointments. I had sung under Waldberger's baton, and he had joined in the applause, and afterwards had said words which I felt would dwell in my memory always. The following day I was sitting in the drawing-room of my handsome suite in Vienna's best hotel, reading a new and much discussed novel. A knock at the door preceded the entrance of a bellboy with a card. I took it unsuspectingly, and read Carl's name; he was a count and major now, but to me the name and titles meant only Carl. I hesitated for a moment; I was curious, nothing more than curious to see him. He had been far from my thoughts. Why should I not see him? So after a moment I bade the boy show the gentleman

up. I went over to the mirror and studied my reflection. My dull blue housegown was not only becoming, but fresh from the hands of a celebrated Parisian *couturière;* my hair, its lustre betokening careful attention from a skillful maid, was fashionably dressed, I wore a curious and beautiful pendant of sapphires, and handsome rings in odd, artistic settings—for I was now quite noted for my unusual and beautiful jewelry—were on my white fingers. I decided that I was looking very well, and resumed my carelessly graceful pose.

He came in, and not the slightest tremor of emotion stirred me. Rather I wondered, even as he raised my hand to his lips, if this elderly man, already too stout, dressed with care in civilian clothes, this man with lines about the mouth and temples, puffiness beneath the eyes which should not yet have made their appearance, could really be Carl, Carl who had for so long a time made me suffer as no one before or since had ever had power to do. All these thoughts passed rapidly through my mind while he was murmuring his greetings, and I was able to reply to them in just the correct tone, something between the indifference of a stranger and mild liking for an old acquaintance not seen for years, and welcome because of youthful associations. We exchanged commonplaces for a few minutes, then evidently not having heard what I had been saying, he suddenly exclaimed:

"Good Heavens, how little you have changed, Luisa!" and stared at me, apparently not realizing how intent was his gaze.

I laughed lightly.

"Thanks very much," I cried. "They say that stage

life keeps one young, or at all events, success on the stage."

"That you have certainly had," he replied seriously, not from mere gallantry. "I have read of you so often during all these years. Nothing but success, eh, Luisa?" He asked this question rather sadly.

"The public has certainly been kind to me," I remarked airily. "Yes, I think it is not too much to say that I am successful. Of course it cannot last long; perhaps in another ten years I shall retire."

"You have made money, you have enough to live on comfortably when you retire?" he asked, evidently less from curiosity than concern for my welfare, but even that did not touch me.

"My friend, I am a wealthy woman," I cried gayly. "I could not only live well but luxuriously for the rest of my days were I to retire to-morrow. But I am not ready for that." Then anxious that friendly interest should not seem to be on one side only, I asked: "And you? Tell me about yourself. You are married I know; I heard that some years ago."

"Yes, I married," was the reply without enthusiasm.

"Have you children?" I asked.

"Yes, two. The boy is delicate. We keep him in the country all the year round; it is better for him." (I heard that his son and heir was not sound mentally, that the mother was subject to attacks of melancholia. There were ugly rumors.) "My little girl is a clever, beautiful child, quite the apple of my eye. She is decidedly musical, too."

"Take care," some demon prompted me to inter-

rupt. "She might take it into her head to become an artist, and think what you would suffer then."

He took my remark so gently that I was ashamed of it.

"It might have been better if her father had had more appreciation of artists," he rejoined, and I hastily changed the subject, asking questions.

He had retired from the army several years before, he told me in answer to one of these, and now held some position at court. He did not once allude to his wife, and I could not bring myself to do so, although I bore her no ill will. Once he interrupted some remark of mine to ask: "And you have never married, Luisa?"

I laughed gayly.

"No indeed. I long since discovered that it is a great mistake for an artist, or at all events a woman artist, to marry. And my life has been too full for me to have much time even to think of matrimony."

He sighed, seemed on the point of saying something, but checked himself, and after a moment I took up the burden of conversation again. It frequently languished, in spite of my self-possession, my ability usually to start subjects and keep them going, dexterously avoiding dangerous turns. I found myself becoming almost embarrassed. Whenever I glanced at him I found his eyes fixed upon my face, while his remarks were chiefly monosyllabic replies to my questions.

Finally he rose, and taking my hand held it for a long moment, trying to look into my eyes as he said good-by. When I raised them to his I think he found

my gaze steady, cool and friendly, for at last he dropped my hand, and with a simple: *"Adieu!"* left the room.

Even then it did not seem that the departing figure was actually Carl. Rather some elderly relative with one or two similar tricks of manner and expression, while my young lover lay dead and buried, deep down under the sod. I felt almost as though I had come from a funeral, not of some dearly loved one, but that of a mere stranger, to whom I had wished to pay a last tribute of respect.

I picked up my novel again, but the story had lost its interest, and I sat for some time pondering on the odd way in which Fate shapes our lives, despite our wishes, hopes, even our prayers. I left Vienna a week later. I have never seen Carl again, nor do I wish to do so. It was like a meeting with a ghost. I will never voluntarily see him again.

During my engagement at Hamburg I frequently visited England. Twice I was a member of a company which gave a special winter season of German opera in London, and I was very well received there in my new rôles. At the expiration of my contract with the Hamburg Opera, I declined to renew it. Pleasant as the five years had been—my only serious difficulty with the management had been when I positively declined to attempt the rôle of *Elektra* in the Strauss opera, which seemed to me to pass the limits of legitimate demands upon a vocal organ—I did not wish to make my home permanently in Germany, and the promise after years of singing there of a pension was no temptation to me. Thank Fortune, I was independent.

Soon after I had given my answer to the management I went to England to make four special appearances at Covent Garden, and while spending a week-end with a friend in her attractive cottage on the Thames, we went motoring one afternoon, and passed this villa in which I am now living. The owner had died recently, my friend told me, when I admired its picturesque appearance, and especially the beautiful garden. We had stopped for a punctured tire just after passing the entrance, or I should never have had time to observe it so closely. A placard announced that it was for sale, and when I returned to London, acting on impulse, I called on the agents. They not only immediately offered me a permit to see it, but also to send one of the clerks down with me by motor if I had time and inclination to make the trip. It was a beautiful summer day, I had no pressing engagements, and accepted the offer. Two days later, I became its owner, and had hardly completed the purchase when I signed another contract for America.

The Metropolitan Opera House was again under a new management, the general manager an acquaintance who had often heard me sing in Italy, while I had also sung under the baton of the musical director, a wonderful man. The terms offered me were very favorable, and again I appeared in the theater in which I had had so many successes.

In many ways my winters there were pleasant, but at the end of my second season, my mind was made up. I had had enough of such arduous work; enough of traveling about for so many months in the year, living in hotels, or in a hired furnished house, with none of

my own belongings with me. So I refused to renew my contract when it expired.

In the three years that have since elapsed, I have had each season my excellent contract with Covent Garden, and during the winter months, filled engagements all over the Continent. In Russia, Germany, and Austria, I enjoy an enviable reputation as a singer of dramatic rôles, especially those of the Wagnerian operas. In Paris, Brussels, Milan, and other cities, my interpretation of such rôles as *La Tosca, Aïda, Leonora* have been received with such favor as totally to disprove the statement that Wagner ruins the voice. Then always I have managed to have a couple of months in my villa, sometimes remaining until the autumn fogs have driven me away.

Nor has my life lacked other interests. In Hamburg, a wealthy and distinguished painter wooed me persistently, yet although I should really have been pleased, almost grateful to him, had he been able to touch my heart, it was not possible. I liked him, admired his work, realized that, as his wife, with my own prestige, and our combined incomes we could attract to our home most agreeable society, but I could not marry him.

Again, in London, I tried hard to fancy myself, if not in love, at least sufficiently interested in him to marry the brilliant playwright who professed to love me, and urged his suit with almost youthful ardor. I pictured to myself the advantages of such a marriage, the real loneliness of my life, the prospect of ever-increasing loneliness. It was useless. My heart was

dead. My one youthful love had left no room for another, even the semblance of one, and the thought of giving up my freedom outweighed all the advantages of married life, so I sent him away as a suitor, but was fortunate enough to keep him as a friend.

CHAPTER XVII

MY SECRET

AND now I come to my secret; a secret which, no matter what gossip there may have been, what idle speculation, yet not one soul but myself knows. Here on these pages I set it down, and experience a peculiar pleasure in making them my confidante. No hint of it has ever passed my lips, nor will it unless after many years. I allude to the reasons which led me, apparently at the height of my fame, my popularity, voluntarily to turn my back upon the stage, to withdraw from public life, to this villa where, during the past weeks, I have amused myself by penning these pages.

Two months before my drastic decision was made, I celebrated—oh no, that word is most inappropriate to my feelings, rather let me say I endured the birthday which meant that I had reached the age of forty-five. A fatal age, or so for many years I had considered it. It had long exerted an almost hypnotic influence over me.

I used to say to myself: when I am forty-five I will retire. Perhaps constant thought of this as a fact had its influence upon me. Needless to say, the public does not know my true age. The fiction of my youthfulness has been so industriously circulated by man-

agers and press agents that, while rivals have added years to my age, no one living has any positive knowledge on the subject save myself, and possibly a few persons in an out-of-the-way small southern town in the United States.

The fatal birthday dawned, signaling my arrival at the age which now seems young, although when I arbitrarily fixed it as that for my retirement, almost venerable. I was in the midst of a highly successful season at Covent Garden, London, an opera house in which I have enjoyed some of my most memorable triumphs. On the actual birthday, I was singing for the seventh time a rôle which I had created that season. Critics had been kind enough to say that I had made the opera a success. It was one of those passionate, intensely modern works of a young composer, written with absolute disregard for the range, capacity and powers of endurance of the soprano voice, however fine. I had undertaken it with reluctance for this very reason, and in spite of my better judgment, but with greater success than I had anticipated. I remember that I smiled at my reflection in the mirror of my automobile as I was driven to the theater that evening. I was forty-five! Well, what of it? I was having a triumphant season. The one rival whom I feared had been prevented from coming to London that year, and I had the field to myself. The public was more than ever cordial, the critics charming.

I was in the best of spirits as I entered the opera house. Biographical sketches had long since proclaimed the day of my birth—not the year!—but I was quite touched to find as I opened the door that

my dressing-room was filled with flowers, and a number of little gifts, including a pretty silver vase from the chorus, quite crowded my dressing table. The door was ajar, as I stood admiring the flowers before banishing them to the corridor, lest their perfume affect my voice. Suddenly I overheard a conversation evidently not intended for my ears. The speakers were two of the lesser singers.

"What? Della Rocca forty? She'll never see fifty again."

"Oh, she can't be as old as that."

"I tell you she is. I have a friend who sang the night she made her début, and that was thirty-one years ago last January. She told me so the other day, and said that Della Rocca was at least twenty-one then."

"She certainly keeps her voice wonderfully."

"Oh, I don't know. She has all her arias transposed down a whole tone."

I closed my door hurriedly. Not all my years of experience with theatrical gossip, its fictions, its allusions to more or less mythical persons for confirmation of the wildest, most improbable statements, could lessen the sting of that "more than fifty" years. And to say that I, Della Rocca, transposed my arias! I, who throughout my career had made a practice of singing my rôles in the original keys, of making no changes in the music save by the composer's advice. My happy mood fled. I was snappish with my maid, and my first entrance found me in an unenviable mood.

This passed as I threw myself into my work. I had the usual number of recalls at the end of the

first act. In the second came the most trying music of my rôle; a long dramatic scene, ending with a high, sustained note, followed by a few bars for the tenor, ending with the curtain falling upon our rapturous embrace. I was singing as usual, with that careful husbanding of my resources for the climax which yet impressed the public as spontaneous passion. All was going well. I took the final high note, held it a moment, when—was that really my voice? Only the utmost presence of mind kept the entire audience from realizing that I, Luisa Della Rocca, whose sureness on these dangerous altitudes even her bitterest rivals envied, had broken on the high note. With all my art, there was a moment of hesitation—or did I only fancy it—before the applause broke out as the curtain fell. The tenor counted for little in the finale; his great moment had been earlier in the act. It was my moment, and mine had always been the applause which had invariably greeted my previous performances.

The applause increased as I stepped before the curtain, bowing and smiling to the audience with the greatest apparent complacency, although my heart beat to bursting, there was a ringing in my ears, and my hands were icy. The conductor—hateful little beast! —noticed this when he took my hand to lead me out for the third recall, which he always took with me.

"You are nervous to-night, Signorina," he said, with odious pity in tone and glance, a pity which I well knew was feigned.

"Nervous?" I replied, as we returned to bow again, and I flatter myself that my tone was unconcerned. "Why no, not more than usual I think. Of course it

is an exacting scene, but I thought it went well to-night, did not you?" And I looked him in the eyes. He was younger than I, his position less assured, so he was a bit taken aback. A moment he hesitated, then:

"Oh, assuredly, as the Signorina says, the scene went very well, but it is very trying. This modern music makes great demands on the voice."

"Yes, you are right, but nowadays everyone feels that he is competent to write operas," I rejoined indifferently. The *Maestro* knew that I knew that an opera by him had been, and was still making the rounds of the European opera houses, and hitherto in vain.

My composure lasted until I was shut in my dressing-room. Then it took all my self-control to avoid a breakdown. There was still the final act, and although its music made fewer vocal demands, I could afford to run no risks. So I forced myself to be calm, drank a little tea, sat silently while my maid changed my costume, rested, and then using all the art I possessed, was able to finish the opera in good shape.

I smiled as I passed from the stage, smiled as I shut myself in my room, smiled at the stragglers in the corridor as, after changing into my own attire, I left the theater. Then I threw myself into a corner of the automobile, my hands clenched, my whole soul longing for solitude. My maid dismissed, the supper which to-night would be untouched placed in my bedroom, at last I was alone.

I threw myself in my loose wrapper on a couch, closed my eyes, and passed what was perhaps the bitterest hour of my life. "What is one note?" an inner voice consoled. "That may happen to anyone. You

were a bit tired; the heated rooms at the Duchess' reception yesterday; any one of various simple reasons may account for it."

"You have never broken on that note before," another voice remorselessly answered. "You are forty-five years old. It is time you retired. Will you really linger on like those venerable singers at whom you have so often sneered? Will you wait until the public shows that it no longer wishes to hear you?"

"That will not, cannot come yet," I tried to reassure myself.

"Not yet, no. A few such accidents as to-night's may be passed over," the inner voice continued. "But your fellow artists all know what happened. Do you think you can deceive them? Do you fancy that the *Maestro* was deceived? He knows, and be sure he will not keep his knowledge to himself."

Why had I not tried to push his wretched opera? I asked myself with sudden regret. Yet even in that case, could I have counted upon gratitude's keeping him silent? My rage then turned on the luckless young composer of the opera. Why had I risked my voice on his impossible music?

I lay for hours sleepless, then in the morning, through my secretary, sent a persuasive note to the manager. I had overtaxed my strength, and requested a two weeks' leave of absence.

My request was granted, and I departed with my maid for a certain Continental cure, whose waters were especially beneficial to me, while the papers announced that I was resting on the south coast.

Rest, the waters, a strict régime, had their effect.

When I returned to London I was much refreshed, despite the fact that I had that very morning discovered my first white hair.

I had arranged, not without bravado, to make my reëntry at Covent Garden in the opera that had been the cause of my partial disaster. I wished if possible to convince myself that my fears were ridiculous; that one broken note need not mean the end of my career, for I knew that no matter what success I might achieve in another rôle, the new one would haunt me until I vanquished the spectre of my own fears.

Everyone was cordial, some effusive in their greetings at the theater, yet it seemed to me that the audience listened critically, that people waited to see what would happen. The great moment of the second act came. The *Maestro* fixed his eyes upon me with a slightly cynical expression. I gazed straight at him, and hurled out a ringing high tone, holding it even a trifle longer than usual. There was no break this time. The audience scarcely waited for the tenor to sing his few measures before bursting into wild applause. I shook the *Maestro's* hand effusively before the curtain, smiling radiantly, but my heart was like lead. Only I knew the effort it had cost to hold that tone. Only I realized that it meant the end of my operatic career. True, there were many operas in my repertoire that made no such demands, but I had been so proud of its extent. Was I to pick and choose now, selecting such rôles as offered few difficulties, and leaving the rest to younger singers? No, a thousand times. And those autumn Continental performances of *Isolde,* for which the contract merely awaited my signature.

Dared I, even after six weeks of rest, sing the tremendously difficult rôle in which I had achieved some notable triumphs? No, I had not the courage to run the risk. Better retire at once.

If I had any thought of weakening in my resolve, an incident a few nights later but strengthened it.

At the beginning of the season I had been asked, with a courtesy to which my many successful seasons entitled me, if I wished to sing *La Tosca* that season. The rôle had been a favorite with me, but I did not like the tenor who was to sing *Cavaradossi,* and I had several new rôles. One of the directors had heard a young Italian singer in the opera, and was enthusiastic over her voice and interpretation. She would sing for a small fee, so great a step upward would a Covent Garden engagement mean. Would I object if she sang the rôle, since the opera could at best be given only twice? I had replied that I had not the least objection. I had all the rôles that I cared for for the season. Secretly I believed that my interpretation would stand comparison with anyone's. Various matters had postponed the performance, the London début of the stranger, until this night, a few days after my return. Judicious press work had aroused some interest in the débutante, and this, with a distribution of passes, effected a good house. A box had been placed at my disposal, and I occupied it, wearing a handsome gown, sitting well forward, my face wreathed in smiles. If anyone fancied me jealous of the newcomer he should be undeceived.

I had not heard her rehearse, but rumors had reached me of a "phenomenal voice," "wonderful tem-

perament," etc., while on the other hand, one of the lesser singers had called especially to inform me that the newcomer had neither voice, temperament nor looks to recommend her. Discounting both enthusiasm and malice, I awaited the entrance of the singer with some inward excitement.

Any prima donna may well be satisfied with her first entrance in this opera. After those imperious notes in the wings have prepared the audience, to come on the stage in a costume whose beauty and effectiveness are limited only by the wearer's taste and purse, whether she choose the Empire style usually worn, or as some recent sensation-loving *Toscas* have preferred, the latest creation of the Rue de la Paix, to burst upon the audience thus, carrying a great sheaf of flowers, surely the most exacting vanity could ask no more.

The moment arrived. The impatient cries: "Mario, Mario!" were a bit smothered, due probably to nervousness, but they were true, and the vision that followed them onto the stage sufficiently attractive to win a round of applause.

Giulia Romana was beautiful in the true Italian type, and her costume of pale yellow suited her admirably. Although no master hand had designed or cut it, the color, the large white hat, with yellow plumes drooping over the singer's dark curls, the fresh, pretty features beneath the hat brim, the brilliant dark eyes, all combined to make a picture which charmed the audience. London audiences are proverbially cold, but they applauded her sufficiently, even if she could have counted on far more enthusiasm in a Continental

theater. Still, when at the close of *Tosca's* great scene in the second act, I went to meet and congratulate my sister artist in her dressing-room, with all the cordiality for which I have carefully cultivated a reputation, the young woman's face was smiling, while several newspaper men tried in faltering French, or still more faltering Italian, to compliment her.

She received my congratulations with evident pleasure. She was not yet old and experienced enough to have lost her gratification at praise from an artist of established reputation.

Having done my professional duty, I left the theater The evening had been sufficiently painful to me, and alone, I was glad to allow the smile which I had worn all the evening to fade.

The Romana's performance of *La Tosca* had been another shock to me. Her voice was not, and never would be what mine had been. Oh, the agony of that mental acknowledgment of diminished beauty! Her acting was crude, but full of the temperamental passion natural to most Latins. Her naturally good voice would blind the great mass of the public to unmistakable faults of style and phrasing, for permeating her entire performance, carrying her public with her irresistibly, was the spirit of youth. This was no mature woman, but a young, ardent *Tosca,* beautiful, compelling. Her audience was bound to feel this spell of youth. That I could give a far more finished, artistic, carefully developed interpretation I knew, but I seemed to realize for the first time, as I watched La Romana, that my youthful spirit was gone, even though maturity had given me other advantages. And as for those high

tones, I should not dare, even if my artistic sense permitted, to hurl them out as she did. But the public could not fail to feel their spontaneity, even if a few, a very few, realized how inartistic they were.

Suddenly the idea of giving mature interpretations of youthful heroines, of carefully husbanding my voice that it might not fail me in difficult moments, of skillfully making up to simulate youth, was repulsive to me. Why continue, and await the inevitable comparisons with new and young singers ever coming to the front? I had an ample fortune, thanks to careful investments, and a streak of natural prudence.

Although my decision was not actually made during the night that followed the performance of *La Tosca,* certainly with each day that followed I contemplated more resolutely my speedy retirement from public life. Nor was my resolution shaken, however my pride was gratified, by several comments in the London papers to the effect that "although displaying marked talent, Mlle. Romana's performance was not that carefully developed characterization to which Mlle. Della Rocca's has accustomed us," etc. Oh, the loyal London public! How I love it, and its unwillingness to find flaws in those whom it has once fully taken to its heart.

A week later, when I was asked to sign my contract for the following season—this had become a mere form—I dropped my bomb. This was my last season in opera, indeed before the public. I felt that I had earned the right to lead a quiet life, away from the glare of the footlights. Flattering dismay greeted this announcement. I was urged to reconsider my decision.

It was hinted that if there were any clauses which I wished inserted in my contract there would doubtless be no trouble in arranging everything to my satisfaction. Had there been any unpleasantness? I assured them that, as was the truth, my relations with them had always been of the pleasantest, and that my announcement was due solely to my wish to abandon a public career.

When they saw that my determination could not be shaken, they yielded. My retirement from the stage at the close of the season was announced in all the papers, and columns of biography appeared, with pictures of me at all ages, and in all my rôles. Interviewers beset me. I was written and talked about as though I were a rising instead of a setting star. I was begged for my reasons for retiring "at the zenith of my fame,"—the phrase became odious—I was interrogated as to my future plans, and when I answered frankly that I had none, the more enterprising journalists invented them for me. The reading of some of the articles was my chief source of amusement during the remaining weeks of the season.

I was "going in for farming on an extensive scale," I had bought a sheep ranch in Australia, a gold mine in South Africa, I intended retiring to a large estate in California, and there raising oranges. I had purchased one of the historic places of England, the locality varying with the writer, and it was rumored that my marriage to an English peer, an American or a South African millionaire would shortly take place. One American newspaper wedded me to a sweetheart of my youth. There was even a picture of this myth-

ical person. In short I was disposed of in every way except by telling the truth.

Meanwhile the management conceived the brilliant idea of a series of farewell performances. I must bid adieu to the public, since retire I would, in all of my favorite rôles. My appearances were limited only by my powers of endurance and willingness. The last evening of the season was set for my final appearance.

It was a gala performance, with an act from each of three operas; an artistic hodgepodge, apparently highly satisfying to the public. The King and Queen returned to London to be present. The opera house was decorated, a brilliant audience in gala attire packed every seat and corner. I was greeted with prolonged applause at my entrance, recalled after each act so many times that I lost count, and that means much with an artist. The stage footmen were kept busy bearing on and off huge floral tributes, flowers were thrown from stalls and boxes, finally an elaborate silver service presented by the entire company, down to stage hands, was exhibited. A diamond necklace from a number of subscribers, and innumerable lesser gifts had already been sent me. It was an evening to linger forever in my memory, indeed it was a memorable one for Covent Garden. Yet seldom had I sung worse. Natural emotion at leaving the scene of some of my greatest triumphs, a public which from the first had been cordial, and which now seemed composed of old and devoted friends, told on my voice, and before the performance was over I was deathly weary. But the audience seemed not to notice; even the critics without one dissenting voice the next day praised me

warmly. Most of them came to my dressing-room during the evening, together with everyone else who could gain admission, and all expressed their regret at my unaccountable determination to retire. All the company came to bid me farewell; all cordial, some really affectionate and friendly, for such feelings can exist between artists, contrary to what many suppose; others delighted that I should no longer be in their way. The King sent for me to come to the royal box, and courteously expressed his regret at my retirement. Certainly I had every reason to be satisfied, and I was.

Thus I definitely and permanently retired from the grand opera stage, where so much of the last twenty years of my life has been spent, from the scene of many triumphs, many secret heartaches; of gratifications, disillusions, successes and failures, although, to do myself justice, I do not believe that the public, or even my dear friends, the critics, have ever associated that word failure with any of my appearances. But while this fact undoubtedly lessens the sting, none the less *I* know of the failures, even although formerly never a hint of them has passed my lips.

I left town the following afternoon, coming directly to this house on the river which has been the only home I have known for years.

It is no show place, such as some might think the home of a successful prima donna must be; it is merely a comfortable house of sufficient size for me to entertain a few friends when I choose, and not too large to feel lost in when I prefer to be alone. Its most striking features are a delightful old garden, shut off, English fashion, by a high wall, and my fine music room, the

studio of the former owner, a portrait painter. It is so large that many operas have been rehearsed within its walls. My collection of autographed photographs of celebrities, singers, artists of all kinds, and a number of royalties as well, hangs on these walls; several portraits of myself, souvenirs of my professional life, bound volumes of programs, etc., are here.

Here then I retired after turning my back on all that had for so long been my life, my first and last, almost my only consideration, occupying almost every waking hour, since no matter what I might be doing, it lurked ever in the background of my thoughts. At last I was free to devote my entire day to whatever occupations or amusements I chose, with no thought of tiresome rehearsals, new rôles to study, old ones to pass with my accompanist, and with no need for considering whether my voice might be affected by possible indiscretions.

Yes, I was free, after all the years, and at first I fancied that I was thoroughly enjoying my liberty. Then I began to pine for occupation. I wandered about my villa aimlessly, I had no desire to sing; my piano was untouched since that last day of my career. The books which I fancied that I wanted to read lay with uncut leaves in my library. After all the years of work, I felt no desire to take up society as an occupation. Yet I was spoiled for an aimless existence. I could, if I wished, fill my time with concert work and singing at private houses. My former agent telephoned, wrote, came in person to entreat me to consider any number of flattering offers, but I felt that I was done once for all with a musical career.

For several weeks I tried to pass my time, tried to fill my empty hours. Then one morning in the garret, turning over old scrap-books, diaries and letters which have lain there during the seven years that I have owned this villa, the thought came to me: I will write the story of my life, and writing with no eye to publication, I would amuse myself with writing the truth. How different it will read, I thought, from the quantities of "biographical sketches" of me which appeared in countless newspapers and magazines, in many countries and languages!

And so after a few weeks of idling in hammock or easy chair, of wandering from house to garden, or driving aimlessly along shady country roads, I came to this unusual occupation of writing.

For more years than I care to count, I have never been so utterly idle. Always before, during vacations I was either resting and gathering strength for but a few weeks, not long enough to become bored, or when not actually filling an engagement, I was learning new rôles, discussing my costumes or private wardrobe for the coming season. There were managers to be seen, details of tours arranged, a hundred things to make me feel pressed for time.

After so many years of travel, I felt no desire for anything so much as to stay for a time in my own home, and since occupation of some kind I must have, I decided to amuse myself with writing this truthful autobiography.

But now my self-appointed task is finished. As I write these words, the autumn leaves are falling, a

mist rises over the river, the landscape is gray. Now what am I to do with my time?

That I am alone is my own choice. I might fill the house with guests, but I shrink from the thought of artists who would be chattering of their plans, their recent triumphs. Since I have left that life, I do not wish continually to be reminded of it. I might accept invitations. Later I shall run up to London, hear some concerts, go to the theater. I shall interview my tailor, my modiste, and after that?

I have begun singing again. Yesterday I sang the entire rôle of *La Tosca,* and my voice was full and pure. This morning I ran over some new songs which were sent me from Paris, but I cannot fill my days thus. I fear that I shall soon tire of singing for myself and four walls alone. Was I foolish to make my retirement so final, so definite? Yet how tired of it all I felt. Ah, well——

I have time for but a few words, then I shall lock this book away, and who can say when I may turn its pages again?

Yesterday afternoon, just as I had rung for tea, who should appear in a motor but Johnson, with his secretary. Hardly giving me time to object, he began talking to me of a contract, a marvelous contract for a concert tour in America. Eight concerts with the three best known orchestras, at two thousand dollars a concert. Then, beginning in the autumn, traveling in my own private car, a tour of not less than forty concerts, at a still higher fee. Why bury myself alive

any longer, he urged? With my voice, my beauty, my genius—the words are his, not mine—it would be little less than criminal to refuse. The public clamored for me.

I hesitated, but the idea had at once appealed to me. Over a cup of tea, I finally agreed to it. Johnson whipped a contract out of his pocket, and I signed it.

I am to sail in February. To-morrow I leave for London, then on to Paris. Roland is sure to be there at this season, and will be of great help in selecting new songs, preparing programs, etc. Then I must order my concert gowns; some very chic and unusual creations I shall wish. I am actually excited at the prospect, and my hand shakes so that I can hardly write the word

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The Confessions of Prima Donna
Used, Very Good